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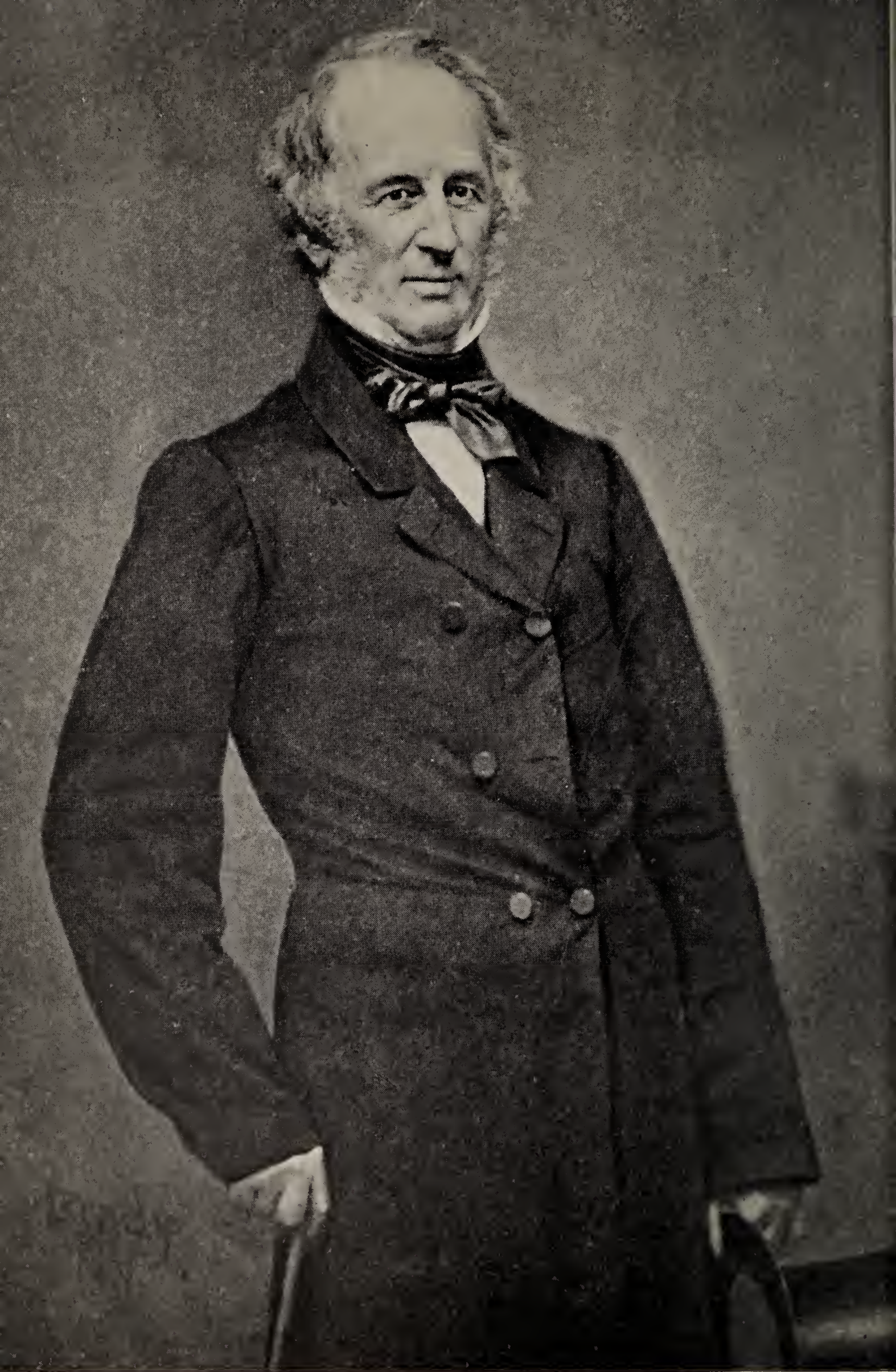


# *The Vanderbilt Legend*









COMMODORE VANDERBILT  
(by Brady)

*(Brown Brothers)*



# *The Vanderbilt Legend*

THE STORY OF THE VANDERBILT FAMILY

1794-1940

BY WAYNE ANDREWS



HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY, NEW YORK

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# *The Vanderbilt Legend*





# *Part One*

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

### I

MILLIONAIRES, on that May day, had forsaken Manhattan. The solid men of the city, after properly dining the composer Offenbach, had departed for the Centennial at Philadelphia. There, in the evening, General Grant would grace a reception in the costly mansion of the publisher Childs. The safer Senators, it was understood, would sip the Childs champagne and inhale the Childs cigars, while their wives would ogle the brilliant toilettes of other ladies. Meantime, in New York none of the landaus or d'orsays of the fashionable enlivened Fifth Avenue. Only the rumor that Cornelius Vanderbilt was dying relieved the tedium of the metropolis.<sup>1</sup>

Insincere brokers, to be sure, had circulated over and over again the report that Commodore Vanderbilt was either dead or dying. And, over and over again, Vanderbilt shares had softened somewhat on the New York Stock Exchange, only to harden on the affirmation that the capitalist still lived. Eventually, indeed, the deaths of Cornelius Vanderbilt had ceased to influence quotations. Yet such tales continued to catch the fancy of reporters. Now, certain dealers whispered that the

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

eighty-two-year-old railroad king was, at last, failing, and that his agents were selling out his stocks. Accordingly, journalists called at his home to verify the story.<sup>2</sup>

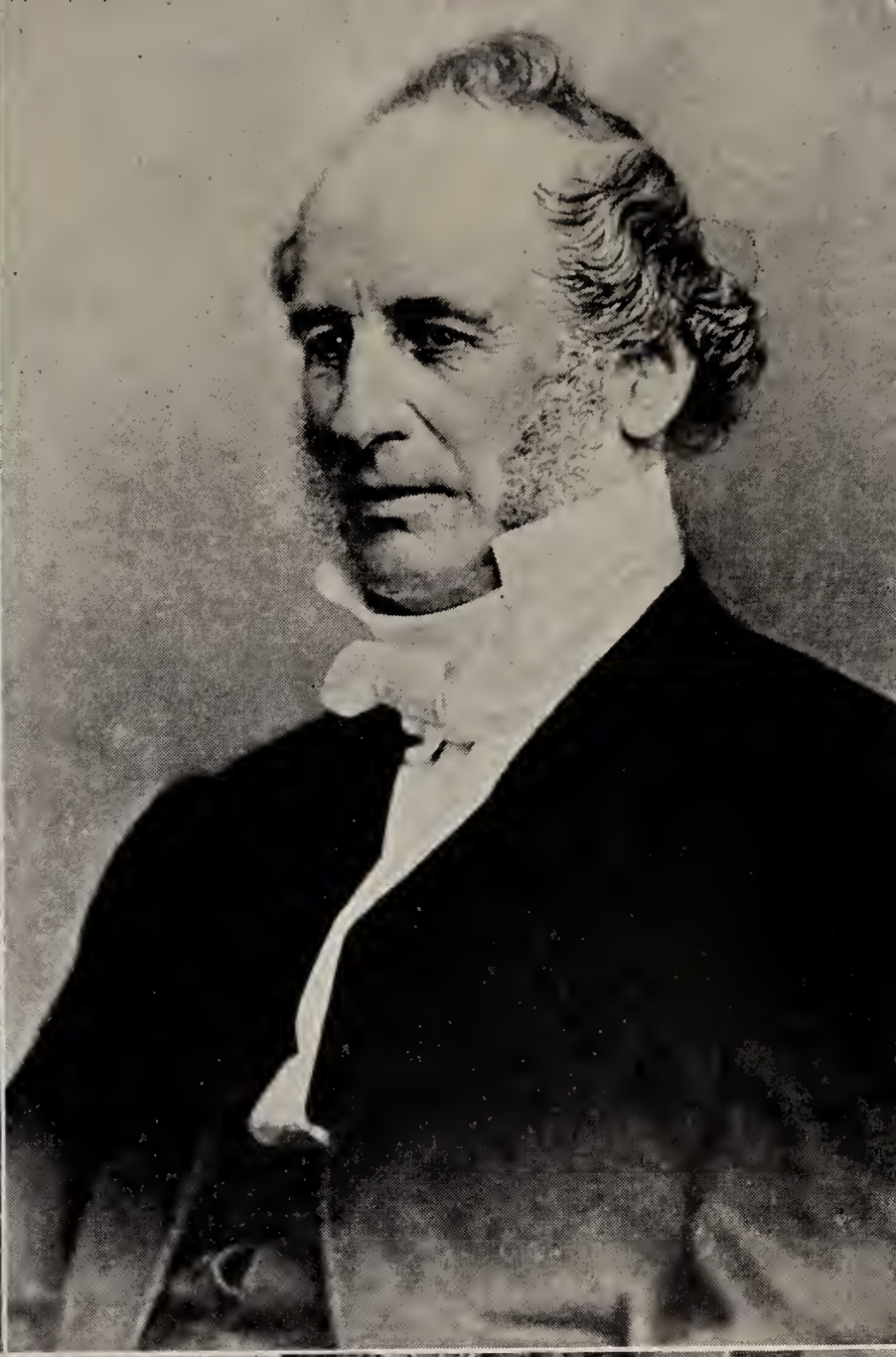
The parlors of 10 Washington Place were very large and commodious, but the pictures hanging on the walls were ordinary. Having sent up their cards, the newspapermen stared then, not at the prints of the Commodore in his roadwagon, but rather at the gold and silver models of steamships which crowded the mantel of his hearth. Some representatives of the press were studying a bust of the magnate when his wife entered the reception room. She protested, gently, that his local disorder was almost entirely removed; his doctors had said that he would be rid of it in a few days. Her husband, however, found this, the latest anticipation of his decease, morbid.

"I am not dying," the octogenarian swore down the stairwell of his house. "Even if I were dying, I could knock all the truth that there is in those wretches who start those reports out of them. That would cause the biggest job for the undertakers that Wall and Broad Streets have afforded for a very great number of years."<sup>3</sup>

The capitalist, for all his indignation, was rapidly declining. Physicians, in the hope of quickening his enfeebled spirits, were recommending champagne. "Champagne?" In his mind Vanderbilt itemized the expense of his illness. "I guess sody water will do," he reproved his doctors. "I don't want to go into the presence of my creator while under the influence of liquor." The while, as Henry Ward Beecher remarked, the temperature of his life was recorded, like the weather, each day in the newspapers.<sup>4</sup>

Hitherto, the life of a Vanderbilt had never concerned an





(Photos U. S. Army Signal Corps  
and New York Central System)

*Above left: W. H. VANDERBILT (by Meissonier). Above right: THE  
COMMODORE (by Brady). Below: THE COMMODORE'S OWN*





(Brown Brothers)

THE PALACES OF W. H. VANDERBILT AND HIS DAUGHTERS MRS. SHEPARD AND MRS. SLOANE. *Far right:* THE CHÂTEAU OF W. K. VANDERBILT I

W. H. VANDERBILT AT THE REINS OF MAUD S. AND ALDINE, AS SEEN BY CURRIER & IVES

(Courtesy of Kennedy and Company)





outstanding clergyman. The first Dutchmen of the name had arrived in America as long ago as 1650, but those Vanderbilts were indistinguishable from other undistinguished Dutch who settled Brooklyn. In 1685, one Art Jansen Van Der Bilt emerged as the grantee of much of Flatbush. Otherwise, no Vanderbilt entered history. Later, in the early eighteenth century, Jacob, son of Aris and nephew of Art Jansen, removed to Staten Island and set up his household there. In those days, missionaries of the Moravian Faith of John Huss were attracting many converts in the English colonies. When Count Zinzendorf, an evangelist of the sect, called on Jacob Van Der Bilt's community, he excited, it would appear, much enthusiasm. Along with their neighbors, the Van Der Bilt's subscribed to the new religious tenets. But the family earned, from all accounts, no particular renown for fervor.<sup>5</sup>

Jacob's son Cornelius, it is safe to assert, entertained no loftier ambition than the farmers who were his forebears. For a while, he worked as a farm hand; eventually, he became a boatman. Each morning he would leave Quarantine with vegetables for New York. Each evening he would sail methodically back to Staten Island. This punctual Van Derbilt (as the name was now spelled) was never a money maker. He revealed acumen but once: in marrying an impoverished New Jersey girl, Phoebe Hand. Resourceful, intelligent, although uneducated, she was even by birth far superior to her unimaginative and slow-witted husband. The Hands were not prominent among the Dutch at Rahway, but they were not altogether obscure. Phoebe's uncle had fought in the Battle of Long Island during the Revolutionary War; no Vanderbilt was memorable in the Rebellion. Phoebe had a small inherit-

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ance, but her patriotism, and her inexperience in investing, led her to place all her funds in the Continental bonds. She lost every penny. At the time Cornelius Van Derbilt courted her, she was living with the family of a kind clergyman at Port Richmond, Staten Island. For a period, the young couple continued to live in that hamlet. But when children came, the Van Derbilts moved to Stapleton. It was there, on May 27, 1794, that Phoebe gave birth to her fourth child and second son: *Cornelius Vanderbilt*. (While he signed himself indifferently Van Derbilt or Vanderbilt, he directed the public, once he was well known, to write the name as one word.)<sup>6</sup>

Of Cornelius' older brother, who died when Cornelius was eleven, nothing is known. Of Cornelius' own youth only homely anecdotes have been preserved. His father, from our information, seldom humored him. On one occasion, he promised the boy a holiday, and what was more inviting, a chance to sail the produce boat. Yet when the time arrived, he informed his son that he and a chum could pitch hay that day, and unload the cargo on the wharf. "You can play all the way," the indolent boatman snickered. Toward the end of his life, young Cornelius told a crony: "A boy can get fun out of almost anything, and we got some fun out of that. But I remember we were just as tired that night as if we had been working."<sup>7</sup>

Cornelius Vanderbilt might well have turned not only for sympathy, but also for guidance, to his mother. Once, when her improvident husband confessed that he did not have the wherewithal to pay his debts, Phoebe Hand drew from an old clock no less than \$3,000 in savings. Her son, twenty-seven days before his seventeenth birthday, appealed to her for one



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hundred dollars to invest in a periauger. In that two-masted sailing barge, he hoped to earn a pittance in the harbor. She remembered that a small farm of the family lay untilled, and she agreed to lend him one hundred dollars by his birthday if in that time he plowed, harrowed, and planted eight acres. "Mother thought," Vanderbilt would relate the incident with comfortable pride, "that she could get the best of me on that eight acre lot, but I got some boys to help me, and we did the work, and it was well done, too, for Mother wouldn't allow any half way of doing it. I claimed my money, got it, hurried off, bought a boat, hoisted sail and was the happiest boy in the world." Thenceforward, he supported himself. He had paid but scant attention to education. It is doubtful that he ever mastered the art of spelling. In later life, he read nothing but the newspapers.<sup>8</sup>

The New York to which he sailed his periauger was already a city of 80,000 inhabitants. Near that polite park, the Battery, stood the gracious mansions of Broadway. The well-bred young girls who lived there practiced on pianos their fathers had purchased from John Jacob Astor, who was selling pianofortes and paying cash for muskrat skins the year Vanderbilt was born. The population deserved, obviously, transportation superior to periaugers. Cornelius Vanderbilt was soon operating not one, but three ferries. At the end of his first year as a boatman, he is said to have returned his mother's one hundred dollars with interest: \$1,000.<sup>9</sup>

The War of 1812, in which Vanderbilt did not enlist, increased his earnings. When the British menaced New York City, Commissary General Matthew Davis advertised for bids to transport supplies for three months to the strategic posts of



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the harbor. Other boatmen submitted ridiculously low quotations: the contract included exemption from military service. Unlike his competitors, Vanderbilt handed in a bid which paid him well. To his surprise, his offer was accepted. "I want the work *done*," Davis explained as he concluded the agreement, "not half-done."<sup>10</sup>

He was gaining, meanwhile, a reputation for daring which cannot have harmed the popularity of his ships. In October, 1813, when Port Richmond repulsed the English, the commander of the garrison insisted on informing New York immediately, even though a raging sea kept every ferry beached. "I'll carry you across," Vanderbilt offered, "but I'll carry you under water half the way." The commander reached the Battery drenched, and Headquarters heard of the victory on Staten Island.

Cornelius Vanderbilt brooked, of course, no interference. One evening, as his boat neared Quarantine, an officer jumped on board from a rival craft, and urged all passengers to transfer. None complied; he met the soldier's insolence with a right to the chin. At the end of the War, he bought a condemned flat-bottomed schooner from the Government for \$1,000. In her he raced the New York oyster fleet to the Virginia beds. He is said to have loaded the unsafe vessel with bivalves until the water reached the third strake on both sides of the hull. "Never mind," he reprimanded the cautious skipper he hired for the trip. "When my boat gets out of the mud, the water will be two strakes lower, and all will be right." All was right. Despite a gale, Vanderbilt returned to New York first of the fleet. He is supposed to have sold his cargo on such terms that he paid for his vessel.<sup>11</sup>

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

At the age of nineteen, the successful entrepreneur determined to marry. He chose Sophia Johnson, daughter of his father's sister Eleanor. Neither of his parents approved the union. His father depended on his income. His mother looked with disfavor on matches between first cousins. Nevertheless, he asked Phoebe to release him from his promise to pay her all his earnings, and, after saving \$500, he was ready to establish his own household. The young girl whom he wedded on December 19, 1813, was, one would judge, a good woman, but quite incapable of comprehending any unusual ambition.<sup>12</sup>

Her husband, however, was already dissatisfied with ferrying. He built, out of his profits, first the schooner "Dread," second the larger schooner "Charlotte." In these ships, he engaged in inordinately successful ventures on the Sound and along the Atlantic coast: at the age of twenty-three, he is reputed to have accumulated a capital of \$9,000. His competitors, annoyed by his accurate commercial insight, may have dubbed him "Commodore" at this time. His truly marvelous profanity may have suggested the title which he carried to the grave.<sup>13</sup>

Now, in 1818, the Commodore exhibited, if not vision, strong sense, for he came to the conclusion that steamships were gradually replacing sailing ships. Intent on acquiring, even at an unsatisfactory salary, a thorough knowledge of the steamboat business, he entered the service of one Thomas Gibbons, a Savannah planter who owned a small steamship line from Elizabeth Town Point, New Jersey, to New Brunswick. At that terminus, Sophia would manage Gibbons' Bellona Hall, an inn for the convenience of travelers from New York



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

to Philadelphia. The contract between Vanderbilt and his employer, which has been preserved, along with other papers of Thomas Gibbons, at Drew University, reads:

Memorandum of agreement made this 26 June 1818 between Thomas Gibbons and Cornelius Vanderbilt—the said Cornelius agrees to serve as master and commander of the Bellona steamboat until the present season is over, or until the ice shall block up the Boat, at the rate of Sixty dollars a Month and the privilege of half the Bar, Gibbons finding the bar furniture, and Vanderbilt preserving the furniture and making the whole good at the end of the Season—Vanderbilt to do all the duties required of him as Commander to run to and from Elizabeth Town, at the landing of the said Thomas Gibbons.

Th. Gibbons

Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Steam navigation, in 1818, was no longer an innovation. As long ago as 1763, William Henry of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, had placed a steam engine in a small craft on the Conestoga River. In the next decade, James Rumsey had run a ship propelled by Watt's invention on the Potomac. In 1804, Robert Livingston Stevens had crossed from Hoboken to New York in a steamboat equipped with the first tubular boiler. And in 1807, Robert Fulton had designed the 130-foot "Clermont," which was capable of four miles an hour, and which covered the distance from New York to Albany in thirty-two hours.

Thanks to that feat, Fulton and his associate Chancellor Livingston were able, in 1808, to wheedle from the New York State Legislature both the exclusive right to steam navigation in New York waters and the unusual prerogative of seizing any vessel which they did not license. Furthermore, merely by

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constructing two more ships, the fortunate grantees could extend their privilege ten years beyond the original limit: twenty years. Irked by this restriction on interstate commerce, states neighboring New York retaliated. Connecticut allowed no steamboat patented by Fulton and Livingston to enter her waters. And if a New Jersey citizen was restrained for infringing the franchise, he was entitled in his own courts to an action with treble costs against the party who impeded him. Thomas Gibbons, however, at the time he hired Vanderbilt, did not care to irritate the monopoly. Rather than send his steamboats direct from New Brunswick to New York City, he relied on sail to transport his passengers and freight from Elizabeth Town Point to Manhattan.<sup>14</sup>

The Commodore, it is interesting to note, did not show himself overly anxious to work at the rate of sixty dollars a month. He complained, before signing the contract with Gibbons, that his home at New Brunswick would not be suitable. "Sir," he wrote his future employer on February 24, 1818. "In respect of the house I think that house at the Roads would not answer atall for it is to far from the Boate and if you think you can not have the storehouse turning into a dwelling I would prefer being in NYork." In the end, the steamship proprietor agreed to lodge Cornelius and Sophia in Bellona Hall.<sup>15</sup>

From time to time Vanderbilt would report to Gibbons the suspicious activities of rivals. "Last evening New Brunswick wais in an uproar," the Commodore one day informed his superior. "Letson toald the passengers that retaining them their was all my falt that all I did it for was to get their supper and lodging from them he offered to take 7 of them for 3 dol-



lars each in one of the Line Stages the bargain wais maid and upon reflection Letson flew. Cannot you stop Letsons mouth?"

Cornelius Vanderbilt, it must be admitted, was never remarkable for his generosity. He carried his cigars in his side pocket, and he once refused a cigar case. "It will be too expensive for me," he reasoned. "When I take it out full of cigars, everybody around will expect me to offer them one. But when I take them out of my pocket, they won't know there are any left." <sup>16</sup>

## I I

"The law?" the Commodore is said to have grinned to a friend who recommended that he get the law of a certain matter. "Why, I have the power already." <sup>1</sup> In the fall of 1818, Vanderbilt, in defiance of the Fulton and Livingston monopoly, was sailing the "Bellona" and the "Mouse of the Mountain" directly from New Brunswick to New York. Aaron Ogden, who had gone to the trouble of purchasing the right to run steamships from Elizabeth Town Point to Manhattan, obtained an injunction against Thomas Gibbons' strange disregard of legality.<sup>2</sup> For a time, Ogden and Gibbons talked compromise; eventually they carried the issue to the highest courts. In the interval, Cornelius Vanderbilt antagonized, blatantly, the franchise; he would enter New York waters, it would seem, merely to provoke incidents. One day, officers boarded his boat only to find that he was not at the helm. As a diversion, he had left his crew behind in New Jersey, and

asked a girl to dock the vessel. On another occasion, he let himself be apprehended on the wharf in New York. To the amazement of officials who had been tracking him for weeks, he peaceably submitted, and agreed to appear at Albany before the Chancellor. But at the Capitol, he confessed that on the Sunday he was arrested, his ship was duly licensed, under the monopoly, to a certain Tompkins. The while, it must be remembered, Gibbons' steamboats *were* licensed, if not by Fulton and Livingston, by the Federal Government under an Act of Congress for coastwise shipping.<sup>3</sup>

As if the Commodore's bravado did not advertise Gibbons' line sufficiently, the "Bellona" bore a flag with the inscription: NEW JERSEY MUST BE FREE.<sup>4</sup> Gibbons, meanwhile, was netting \$40,000 a year, and he increased his captain's salary. Vanderbilt had already declined advantageous offers from rivals. "I'll stick to Mr. Gibbons until he is through with his troubles," he decided.<sup>5</sup> When his employer proposed paying him as much as \$5,000 a year, he is credited with rejecting the idea. He afterwards said: "I did it on principle. The other captains had but \$1,000 and they were already jealous enough of me. Besides, I never cared for money. All I ever cared for was to carry my point."<sup>6</sup>

At last, in the February term of 1824, Aaron Ogden and Thomas Gibbons brought their dispute before the Supreme Court of the United States. Thomas J. Oakley and Thomas Addis Emmett represented Ogden; William Wirt and Daniel Webster, Gibbons. Of Marshall, who presided, Webster remarked: "I think I have never experienced more intellectual pleasure than in arguing that novel question to a great man who could appreciate it, and take it in; and he did take it in,

as a baby takes in his mother's milk." <sup>7</sup> Such legal logic can scarcely have held the attention of Cornelius Vanderbilt; he did, however, arrange that Webster should act as Gibbons' attorney.

The immediate question which Justice Marshall was called upon to decide was whether the several states could continue to arrest the development of nation-wide commerce; the Fulton-Livingston interests were frustrating competitors within and without New York. His decision, in favor of Gibbons, and indirectly of Vanderbilt, naturally stimulated free internal trade. Yet, at the same time, his ruling, by releasing uncontrolled initiative, created the legal climate in which ruthlessly individualistic business men struggled for survival. For decades to come, the Federal Government made no sincere attempt to curb their enterprise. In the end, they succeeded in monopolizing industry quite as effectively as Fulton and Livingston. Hence, although *Ogden vs. Gibbons* pretended to dissolve monopoly, the opinion actually permitted monopoly of another sort.

It would not be idle, perhaps, to claim that Webster's thought influenced Marshall. The judge incorporated none of the lawyer's reasoning into his decision, but Webster's hint that the franchise was no local inspection law but an act of sovereign power easily turned to other, subversive ends, could have warned Marshall of the danger, in New York's presumption, to liberties other than economic. The Chief Justice stressed, in his memorable ruling, that clause of the Constitution which states that ". . . Congress shall have the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes." Marshall inter-



preted *commerce* to mean not merely *traffic*, but also *intercourse*. He admitted that the Federal Government had no right to interfere with the *internal* trade of the various states, and he conceded that inspection laws were outside the exclusive power of Congress. But he held that the mind could scarcely conceive of a system for regulating commerce which did not rule on navigation. Here, the monopoly conflicted with the Acts of Congress on coastwise shipping, the very acts under which Gibbons licensed his steamers. Such legislation, enacted in pursuance of the Constitution, was obviously superior to any state law. Gibbons' ships were properly enrolled; whether they were propelled by sail, steam, fire, or wind did not concern the State of New York.

Those words undid the franchise, but Vanderbilt continued in the service of Thomas Gibbons, and after Gibbons' death in 1826, in the service of Gibbons' heirs. He did not, evidently, care to play an independent role, although his name was already of consequence in shipping. On one occasion, he freed from the ice of New York Harbor the "Elizabeth," a ship loaded with blacks for Liberia. By placing planks on ice too thin to stand on, and by sinking an anchor ahead of himself, he finally liberated the distressed vessel. No other captain, apparently, cared to run the risk of immersion. Competitors admired, no doubt, his pluck even if they little liked his arrogance. Once he docked the "Thistle" at the very dock the rival "Legislature" rented, flatly refused to remove the steamboat, and scoffed at the authority of the harbor-master.<sup>8</sup>

At length, in 1829, the Commodore decided to engage in

steamboating for himself. "Take the whole property, Vanderbilt, and pay for it as you make the money," suggested William, Thomas Gibbons' son.<sup>9</sup> That the Commodore was unwilling to consider. As he afterward recalled: "I persuaded him to let me use the profits I should realize in the business in further extending it. This I did until in his eyes it had grown so large that the amount was too large to risk, and he refused to let me go ahead any longer, although he had such confidence in me as to offer me a partnership. I did not accept the partnership because I knew his other partners and I could not agree, and I never could quarrel where I was one of the interested persons. I did not object to insisting upon the rights of my employer so long as I was not directly interested, but to enter into a partnership where I knew I should have to maintain my own rights by repeated quarreling was more than I would agree to."<sup>10</sup>

Cornelius Vanderbilt had saved \$30,000. Now, although Sophia was reluctant to leave New Brunswick and Gibbons' employ, he invested in his first steamboat, the "Caroline." His profanity may have convinced his wife. In after years, the Commodore told of dining his mother on board the "Caroline." The capitalist insisted that she complimented his ingenuity with: "Corneel, where the damn hell did you get that dinner?" "Commodore," his listeners would interrupt, "she didn't say any such thing." But Vanderbilt would put the oath once more in the mouth of his mother.<sup>11</sup>

"Good vessels and good commanders are the best kind of insurance," Cornelius Vanderbilt is reputed to have claimed. "If corporations can make money in the insurance business,

so can I.” And according to one account, he is supposed never to have insured his ships. Underwriters, to be sure, might not have wished to assume the risk of certain of his steamboats.<sup>12</sup>

### I I I

On leaving New Brunswick, Cornelius and Sophia resided for a period in New York City, but in 1839 the growing family of the young steamboat proprietor moved to Staten Island. There, between Stapleton and Tompkinsville, the Commodore built a noble marine villa which cost, such was his prosperity, \$27,000. This home, long since razed by fire, was in the Gothic style, modified by a Grecian portico with six fluted columns. The interiors, it is related, were imported. The solid, heavy mantels were of Egyptian marble; the glass throughout was French plate. Workmen from England constructed the superb oval staircase of the mansion. The front door enclosed, in colored glass, a painting of a swift Vanderbilt steamer, the “Cleopatra.” This majestic residence, this elegant testimony of material progress, stood on a terrace overlooking the Bay.<sup>1</sup>

The Commodore had managed an independent line from New York to Philadelphia. In 1830, he entered the steamboat business on the Sound and on the Hudson. When he established service to Peekskill, Robert Livingston Stevens, in fear of rate-slashing, withdrew from the route. Yet an entrepreneur, however aggressive, could not count on constant



profits. On the 7th of June, 1831, brother Jacob Vanderbilt's steamer, the "General Jackson," exploded at her dock in Haverstraw Bay.

The catastrophe suggested to Daniel Drew, a drover in upstate New York, that he too might compete on the Peekskill route. With a friend, he acquired the "Water Witch." Vanderbilt countered by adding the "Cinderella" to his fleet and by reducing rates. The "Water Witch" lost \$10,000 in her first season. "You will soon fail in this business," the Commodore admonished his competitor.<sup>2</sup> "You don't know anything about running boats. You know a good deal about judging cattle. That's your line. Boats is my line. You don't understand it." Nevertheless, Daniel Drew had invented the term *watered stock*: he had sold the butcher Heinrich Astor (John Jacob's brother) cattle swollen with water gulped at the end of a twenty-four hour salt diet. Now, the former drover alarmed the citizenry of Putnam and Westchester Counties with tales of the dire monopolistic intentions of Cornelius Vanderbilt; furthermore, he slashed the fare to Peekskill to twelve and one-half cents. "Do you think, Commodore, that I understand the steamboat business?" he dryly inquired one day thereafter. "I don't think anything about it, Uncle Dan'l"—Vanderbilt acknowledged that Drew had damaged his profits. "You do." And he purchased the "Water Witch."<sup>3</sup> "The Bible," Daniel Drew may well have reminded his rival, "should be your comfort in this hour." The cunning drover was ever ready to recommend the scriptures to his victims.

The Commodore was soon molesting the North River Association, which served the New York-to-Albany run. Dean

Richmond of that line was proud of his efficient steamers, but he had no inclination to provoke a rate war. Instead, in 1836, he bribed Vanderbilt not to compete for the next ten years.<sup>4</sup>

In those times, the first railways of the United States were being surveyed. In 1826, the Legislature of New York granted a charter to the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad, the conception of George Featherstonehaugh, who fancied that rails might one day cross the state. In 1833 the Commodore, while riding in the cars of the Camden and Amboy Railroad, was critically injured in an accident near Hightstown, New Jersey. His ribs were fractured, his knees torn, and his lungs pierced.<sup>5</sup> Cornelius Vanderbilt was never eager to place his funds in experiments; henceforth he confined his ventures, not unnaturally, to steamboats. His lines were running not only to Peekskill but to the Sound and to the Connecticut River as well. At the age of forty, he was worth \$500,000.

The epoch favored the accumulation of such wealth. The newly rich were founding dynasties. In 1843, the adroit tobacconist Pierre Lorillard disposed of the then fabulous estate of one million dollars. To label Lorillard, journalists found the freshly coined epithet *millionaire* convenient. When, five years later, John Jacob Astor died, he abandoned here below no less than twenty millions in choice real estate. In this era, the Roosevelts, too, were asserting their social and financial power.

The enterprising shopkeepers of the age took particular pains to acquaint themselves with the actual extent of their customers' growing holdings. *The Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City*, compiled by Moses Yale Beach, passed from hand to hand. The edition of 1845



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credited the banker August Belmont with \$100,000, the showman P. T. Barnum with \$150,000, the shipowner E. K. Collins with \$200,000, the landowner Peter Goelet with \$400,000, and the merchant A. T. Stewart with \$400,000. The reference book estimated the fortune of the Commodore at \$1,200,000 and added: “. . . of an old Dutch root, Cornelius has evinced more energy and goaheaditiveness in building and driving steamboats and other projects than ever one single Dutchman possessed. It takes our American hot suns to clear up the vapors and fogs of the Zuyder Zee and wake up the phlegm of a descendant of old Holland.”

Credit ratings did not, of course, concern good society to that degree. In the opinion of people who kept carriage company, even old Astor was no more than a phenomenon. The retired auctioneer Philip Hone was self-made, but he adopted the manners of his exquisite betters and recorded in his fastidious diary that John Jacob Astor “. . . sat at the dinner table with his head down upon his breast, saying very little, and in a voice almost unintelligible; the saliva dropping from his mouth, and a servant behind him to guide the victuals which he was eating, and to watch him as an infant is watched. His mind is good, his observation acute, and he seems to know everything that is going on, but the machinery is all broken up, and there are some people, no doubt, who think that he has lived long enough.”<sup>6</sup> Only in the hands of his grandchildren did his millions acquire elegance. At length, in 1846, thanks to an *affaire de luxe*, the Astors joined the upper ten thousand. Hone chronicled: “The better sort have been regaled, of late, by a grand wedding. Mr. John J. Astor, son of Mr. William B. Astor, and grandson of Mr.

## C O M M O D O R E   V A N D E R B I L T

John J. Astor, married Miss Augusta Gibbes, daughter of Mr. Thomas L. Gibbes. The wedding was attended, at the home of her father, by all the fashionable people of the city. Last evening, my daughter and son went to a grand party at Mr. Astor's, and I also was tempted to mix once more in the splendid crowd of charming women, pretty girls and well-dressed beaux. The spacious mansion in Lafayette Place was open from cellar to ceiling, blazing with a thousand lights. The crowd was excessive; the ladies (such part of their exquisite forms as could be distinguished in the *mêlée*) exquisitely and tastefully attired, with a display of rich jewelry enough to pay one day's expense of the Mexican War." 7

But although Hone was stirred by the grand wedding of the Astors, he never *revered* recent fortunes. He never idolized their shrubs, as he did the Stuyvesants': ". . . I have seldom witnessed a more interesting sight than that of the old pear tree on Third Avenue, now in the full exuberance of its spring garb of blossoms. It is now two hundred and one years old, having been planted by Governor Stuyvesant in his garden, which embraced all this populous part of the city, on his arrival from Holland. In laying out the streets and avenues, this relic of antiquity came at the corner of two wide thoroughfares, where it is protected; its wide dark trunk standing strong and stout, and its branches spreading out in fantastic forms, and new blossoms vouching, on the return of spring, for the vitality of the ancient child of the former garden, of which it is the sole memorial. It is now in full blossom. Having expressed my admiration of the time-honored tree, at Mr. Fish's dinner, among the Stuyvesants, the Fishes and the Winthrops, they very politely had some of the blos-



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soms gathered and sent to me, which I intend to preserve as a specimen of long-lived vegetation, and a floral reminiscence of the Stuyvesant dynasty.”<sup>8</sup>

Needless to say, no one who indulged so deliberately a taste for old money could pay particular attention to the crisp \$1,200,000 of Cornelius Vanderbilt. Doubtless the diarist recognized that the Commodore was too uncouth to participate in fine occasions. The steamboat captain, on the eve of the election of 1844, lowered the tone of a Grand Whig Parade for Clay and Frelinghuysen.

### PROTECTION TO AMERICAN INDUSTRY

read the banners which mechanics carried up Broadway.<sup>9</sup> Unhappily, when the prize fighter Yankee Sullivan strolled from a near-by saloon to tug at his reins, the young capitalist descended from his horse and slugged the pugilist.<sup>10</sup> The spectators, according to a newspaper of the time, numbered 7,300. Later the Commodore spoiled the serenity of a civic reception. His steamship, the “C. Vanderbilt,” transported President Polk from Amboy to New York, but let off so much steam at the dock that none could hear the addresses in honor of the Chief Executive.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, on June 1, 1847, Philip Hone noted: “A great steamboat race came off between the *Cornelius Vanderbilt*, which bears the name of her enterprising proprietor, and the *Oregon*, Captain Law. They went to Croton Point, and returned, seventy-five miles in three hours and fifteen minutes—a rate of speed which would carry a vessel to Liverpool in five or six days. The *Oregon* gained the race, and Captain Vanderbilt was beaten for once.”<sup>12</sup> Hone omitted to mention that the “Oregon,” after



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consuming all her coal, was forced to burn berths, settees, chairs, and doors in order to finish first. The cabins and saloons of the "C. Vanderbilt," gorgeously appointed with rosewood furniture upholstered in crimson velvet, remained intact.<sup>13</sup> Some said that the Commodore might have won the contest had not his engineer misunderstood a signal.



An ugly rumor holds that Cornelius Vanderbilt, in the summer of 1846, fell violently in love with his children's governess. The capitalist did prevail upon Sophia, who was then undergoing change of life, to travel to Sharon Springs and Canada with her daughter Ethelinda and Ethelinda's husband, Daniel B. Allen. When Sophia returned, her husband decided that her mind must be unbalanced, and he confined her in the asylum of Dr. McDonald in Flushing.<sup>14</sup> The same ugly rumor maintains that William Henry Vanderbilt, Cornelius' oldest son, was the only child who did not protest Sophia's internment. Afterward, W. H. Vanderbilt denied the accusation. "I had nothing to do with that," he said. "I never in my life interfered in the affairs of my father, and I do not think the others did."<sup>15</sup> He claimed that Sophia retired willingly to the asylum. "I believe she did. It was always understood so." According, again, to our unhealthy report, the governess declined to live with the Vanderbilts in Sophia's absence, and William Henry Vanderbilt secured a young girl to content his father. "The old man is bound to have his way, and it is useless to oppose him," the oldest son is credited with saying. He is supposed to have observed that the Commodore was bound to fall under the influence of some

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woman: "I am bound to have the appointment of that woman." In the fall of 1846, Sophia, whom physicians at Flushing pronounced of sound mind, rejoined her family.<sup>16</sup>

In the interim, Cornelius Vanderbilt had moved from Staten Island to a comfortable Greek Revival mansion, costing \$55,000, at 10 Washington Place, New York. The neighborhood was substantial.<sup>17</sup>

### IV

William Henry Vanderbilt, from all accounts, was ever disposed to humor parental whims. His brother-in-law Daniel B. Allen remarked: "I never saw William resent any of the many ill-natured speeches of his father. He would call him a *blatherskite* and a *sucker*; that word *sucker* was a very common epithet with the Commodore. William said nothing, and took it with meekness, whiningly. Well, there was a falling down of his jaw, peculiar to him, and a peculiar noise of a whine without words."<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1821, at New Brunswick, that Sophia bore this, her third child. He received an education, but along practical lines. His courses at the Columbia College Grammar School stressed bookkeeping. When, at the age of eighteen, he entered the employ of Drew, Robinson and Company, the banking firm of Daniel Drew, the Commodore presumed that he would remain perched on a stool for the rest of his days. Plodding, patient, and unadventurous, he resembled, pain-

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fully, his punctual grandfather. He did not complain of his salary, although he earned in his first year as a clerk but \$150, his second, \$300, and his third, \$1,000. As soon as his weekly wage touched nineteen dollars, he decided to take a wife. Unlike his father, he saved nothing in anticipation of his wedding. With his bride, Maria Louisa Kissam, the daughter of a Brooklyn clergyman, he rented a furnished room on East Broadway. Cornelius Vanderbilt did not advance a cent to the newlyweds, for he reasoned that an improvident dolt should not assume such a responsibility. Drew, Robinson and Company held a higher opinion of the bridegroom. They were considering his promotion when his health, mined by long hours, gave way. Fortunately, physicians understood that the fatigued accountant required country air, and persuaded the Commodore to establish him as a farmer on Staten Island.<sup>2</sup>

William Henry was quite as meticulous on his Staten Island fields as he had been in the banking house, and he permitted no detail, however insignificant, to escape his notice. Under such management, his farm prospered. Within a few years, he was raising over 1,500 barrels of potatoes, over 1,000 bushels of corn, and over ten acres of oats. His crops called for much manure. Usually he purchased his fertilizer from the Fourth Avenue stables. Once he thought of buying dung from his father. "It's worth four dollars a load to me," William Henry told the older Vanderbilt. Since the Commodore knew that fertilizer was worth only two dollars the carload, he accepted his son's offer eagerly, without troubling to define *load*. On the next afternoon he noticed, at the dock, a scow heaped many carloads high with dung. "How many



loads have you got on that scow, Billy?" "One load," the younger Vanderbilt snickered as the stench tickled his nostrils. "One *scow-load*." Surprised by this native shrewdness, Cornelius Vanderbilt was now ready to admit that his oldest son possessed the proper instincts.<sup>3</sup>

Not long after William Henry settled on Staten Island, he determined to acquire several hundred acres of a neighbor. "I incurred a larger expense than I expected," he granted. "About \$6,000 more than I had." As he did not dare ask his father for such a sum himself, he sent a family friend to plead with the Commodore. "Damn him!" Cornelius Vanderbilt refused to lend the \$6,000. "Let him mortgage his farm."<sup>4</sup> The older Vanderbilt turned to one of his sons-in-law, W. K. Thorn: "Why, he has told me that he was making \$10,000 a year on that farm; now, what has he done with that money?" "Why," Thorn reminded the millionaire, "he is educating a large family in a manner that is becoming to your grandchildren, and that takes a good deal of money."<sup>5</sup> When William Henry did mortgage his farm, tantrums possessed the Commodore. "Billy, you don't amount to a row of pins. You won't never be able to do anything, but bring disgrace upon yourself, your family and everybody connected with you. I've made up my mind to have nothing to do with you." For once, W. H. Vanderbilt defended himself. "The farm required considerable investment," he insisted, "and I had no money. My object in life has always been to please you, and I am profoundly grieved to see that I am unable to do so. I can assure you of one thing, and that is, not one cent of this money has been diverted to my personal comfort. The transaction is perfectly businesslike. I engaged to pay off the

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mortgage at a certain date. I shall do so. I cannot see that I have done anything to be ashamed of." Suddenly, Cornelius Vanderbilt relented. "Will that man take his money?" he asked. "I suppose he will," William Henry conjectured. The Commodore then drew a check for \$6,000. "There may be something in the boy, after all," he grumbled later to his cronies at euchre.<sup>6</sup>

While the obsequious W. H. Vanderbilt was proving himself, despite his clerical inclinations, a capable business man, his younger brother Cornelius Jeremiah dissipated in gambling a significant percentage of his father's wealth. "I'd give a hundred dollars," the Commodore said of this son, "if he'd never been named Corneel." On another occasion, Vanderbilt informed his correspondents in neighboring cities: "There is a crazy fellow running all over the land calling himself my son. If you come in contact with him, don't trust him." The capitalist did not explain that the "crazy fellow" was suffering from epilepsy. If Cornelius Jeremiah brought his hand to his neckcloth to ward off a fit, his father would only murmur: "He is a very smart fellow, but he has a cog out." Yet his piteous disease moved Horace Greeley. The kindly editor of the *Tribune* would continually advance funds to the epileptic, even though he invariably scattered the sums in hells. The hapless young man would frequent not only the elaborate casino of George Beers at Thirteenth Street and University Place, but also the parlors of Matthew Dancer downtown. After sampling, night after night, the rich dishes Beers prepared for his Wall Street patrons, the miserable son of the Commodore would swoon over the faro tables of the estab-



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lishment. On the morrow, young Vanderbilt might lose even more heavily in Dancer's rooms.<sup>7</sup>

"Greeley, I hear yer lendin' Corneel money," the Commodore finally confronted the editor of the *Tribune*. "Yes," Greeley allowed, "I have let him have some." "I give you fair warning," Vanderbilt cautioned, "that you need not look to me; I won't pay you." "Who the devil asked you?" the editor rejoined. "Have I?"<sup>8</sup>

Cornelius Jeremiah was unsuccessful in countless callings. He failed as a law clerk, he failed as a leather merchant, he failed as a farmer, and he failed as a revenue agent. His father would put him away, if epileptic spasms seized him. In 1849, and again 1854, he underwent detention in the Bloomingdale Lunatic Asylum. Notwithstanding, a woman determined to devote herself to his redemption. "I have a divine mission to save that young man," Miss Ellen Williams confided to her father. Mr. Williams urged his daughter to reflect before she redeemed, but he consented to call upon the Commodore.

"Has your daughter plenty of silk dresses?" Vanderbilt inquired on learning that Cornelius Jeremiah had asked Ellen's hand. "Well," Williams considered, "my daughter, as I told you, is not wealthy. She has a few dresses like other young ladies in her station, but her wardrobe is not very extensive or costly." "Has your daughter plenty of jewelry?" the Commodore continued his interrogation. "No, sir," Williams defended his modest situation, "I have attempted to explain to you that I am in comparatively humble circumstances, and my daughter cannot afford jewelry." "The reason I ask you," the millionaire concluded his examination, "is

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that if she did possess these articles of value, my son would take them and either pawn them or sell them, and throw away the proceeds at the gaming table. So I forewarn you and your daughter that I can't take any responsibility in this matter." <sup>9</sup>

Cornelius Vanderbilt did not otherwise hinder the marriage, but he declined to lend Cornelius Jeremiah \$10,000 with which to build a house. "No, Corneel," he decided, "you have got to show that you can be trusted before I trust you." It was Ellen Williams who obtained the necessary funds from the Commodore. Later, she returned to pay a second call on her father-in-law. "Well"—the capitalist awaited another demand for cash—"what can I do for you now?" "Well, papa"—Ellen amazed the millionaire—"we did not need all the money, so I brought you back \$1,500." Thereafter, the steamboat entrepreneur trusted her implicitly.<sup>10</sup>

Once, during a visit the senior Vanderbilt made to the farm Cornelius Jeremiah managed near Hartford, she actually confounded her father-in-law. While the two were driving through the surrounding country, the Commodore carefully retold every misdeed of his son. At last, as the carriage came to the crest of a hill—"Isn't it," she asked, "somewhat your fault?" Of a sudden, tears moistened his eyes. "The view of Hartford"—he avoided her question—"is pretty." Later, as they sat together at the hearthside of his namesake, the Commodore pointed to the solid gold model of the crack steamer "Cornelius Vanderbilt" which graced the mantel. "I'd give that ship and her bilers \* too," he confessed to Ellen, "to cure Corneel of his ailment." <sup>11</sup>

\* Vanderbilt never pronounced the "o" in that word.

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The third son, George Washington Vanderbilt, was his father's favorite. On his twenty-second birthday this Vanderbilt, supremely athletic, is said to have lifted 908 (sic) pounds.<sup>12</sup> George entered West Point, and, it is easy to believe, pursued his studies there with some distinction, for the Commodore purchased an elegant villa on Harlem Lane for the soldier and his fiancée.<sup>13</sup> The daughters of Cornelius Vanderbilt numbered nine, but they never won, it would appear, that sympathy. Their descendants could not bear his name. "They are nice children," the steamboat king said of the children of Emily, the wife of W. K. Thorn, "but they are not Vanderbilts."<sup>14</sup>

## V

Early in the 1850's, an agent of the Czar traveled to New York to negotiate the building of steamships for the Imperial Navy. Struck by the extent of the steamboat lines of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Nicholas' representative thought the entrepreneur might supervise the contracts. Yet the Russian held a skeptical opinion of the Commodore, for he suggested that the millionaire write the President, Mr. Fillmore, and the Secretary of State, Mr. Webster, for an endorsement of his good character. That, the Commodore hotly resented. The *Herald* commented, amused:<sup>1</sup> "What! the Emperor of Russia not know him, Corneel Vanderbilt! What! A certificate from such small potatoes as Millard Fillmore or Daniel Webster, neither of whom had a dollar in his pocket beyond his



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pitiful salary—they certify him—Corneel Vanderbilt, a man of millions, the Emperor of all the Dollars! The thing was preposterous, perfectly absurd. This Russian agent was an ignoramus—something wrong about him—he might be a privateer, sailing under false colors. And so he left, without a contract with Corneel Vanderbilt or anybody else.”

In 1838, the Commodore had purchased the interest of one John S. Westervelt in the Richmond Turnpike Company, which operated the Staten Island steam ferry; ten years later, in exchange for \$80,000, he bought the share of Westervelt's partner, Orondates Mauran.<sup>2</sup> And he engaged, of course, in more ambitious ventures. With the “Cleopatra” he connected New York and Hartford. With the “C. Vanderbilt” and the “Commodore” he joined New York to Boston via Stonington. With the “North Carolina,” the “Governor Dudley,” the “Vanderbilt,” and the “Gibraltar,” he maintained a regular mail service between Washington and Charleston. With still other steamships, he formed a line between Havana and Matanzas.<sup>3</sup> Then, beginning in 1851, he dispatched liners to California via Nicaragua.

Vanderbilt, however, did not risk his capital in the San Francisco trade until others proved the route profitable. Mexico did not cede California to the United States until 1848, but already in 1847 Congress, by providing mail service to settlers in Oregon, anticipated commerce with the Pacific Coast. On that March 3, A. G. Sloo of Cincinnati secured an annual subsidy of \$290,000 for agreeing to commence bi-weekly sailings from New York to Savannah, Havana, New Orleans, and Chagres at the Isthmus of Panama. On the same day Arnold Harris of Arkansas obtained an annual grant of

\$199,000 for biweekly schedules from Panama to Oregon. In return for this financial assistance, Sloo and Harris were to construct steamers capable of naval use in time of war. Neither operator chose to perform his contract. On September 3, George "Live Oak" Law, the fortunate master of the "Oregon," assumed Sloo's franchise and formed the United States Mail Steam Ship Company. On November 19, William Henry Aspinwall, trained as a merchant in Venezuela and Central America, took over Harris' privilege and organized, along with Henry Chauncey, Richard Alsop, and the Howlands, the Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company. Law and Aspinwall, it must be remembered, were busying themselves in speculative enterprises, for only in January 1848 did a laborer discover gold on the lands of John A. Sutter. The maiden voyages of the United States and Pacific Mail lines occurred in October and December of that year. Surprised by bullion shipments and passenger lists, the two entrepreneurs competed unwisely over the entire route, instead of dividing the territory as the franchises intended. Finally, in the spring of 1851, the shipowners put an end to such inefficient rivalry. Thereafter the United States and Pacific Mails operated in their proper spheres.

Cornelius Vanderbilt does not seem to have considered a fleet to California before 1849. Ships were then departing for the West Coast at the rate of fifteen a week.<sup>4</sup> The Commodore, not without ingenuity, decided to exploit the Isthmus of Nicaragua instead of Panama. His judgment, in that respect, was beautiful. Not only was the Nicaraguan route 500 miles shorter than the Panaman, but also only twelve of the miles which separated the two oceans were on land. Observing



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that the San Juan River joined Lake Nicaragua with the Atlantic, Vanderbilt fancied a canal connecting the Lake with the Pacific. His conception won the approval of the local government. In 1849 he created the American Atlantic & Pacific Ship Canal Company and received a charter which allowed him twelve years to complete the channel. The millionaire and his partners, Joseph L. White and Nathaniel H. Wolfe, promised to pay \$10,000 the moment the contract was ratified, \$10,000 a year until the canal was completed, and \$200,000 in canal stock outright. Once the waterway was finished, the state was to receive for the next twenty years 20 per cent of the net profits, after deducting the interest of the capital employed in the construction at 7 per cent per annum. Thenceforward, the state would receive 25 per cent of the net profits, again after deducting 7 per cent per annum. The franchise, it is curious to note, included an escape clause: in case the channel scheme proved impracticable, the Commodore could build a railroad, or rail and carriage road, in its stead.<sup>5</sup>

In 1850, by the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, Great Britain and the United States agreed to sponsor jointly any attempt by private capital to develop a Nicaraguan canal. Elated no doubt by that diplomatic enthusiasm, Vanderbilt journeyed to London in the fall in the hope of interesting Baring Brothers. To his dismay, the great banking house looked with a diffident eye on the project, and asked him to substantiate his claims with facts. When, on a second voyage to England, representatives of the Atlantic & Pacific Ship Canal Company produced a survey of a \$31,000,000 waterway, Joshua Bates, the American-born partner of the Barings, frowned. Bates



explained that the channel, in order to be profitable, would have to serve 900,000 tons of shipping a year, whereas only 600,000 tons were afloat in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.<sup>6</sup> Meantime, on the New York Stock Exchange, speculators inflated, then depressed, the market value of the canal rights. Whether Vanderbilt joined in those jolly operations is not known.<sup>7</sup>

In any event, the reticence of the Barings cannot have embarrassed the Commodore. On August 14, 1851, the Nicaraguan Government, ever obliging, ratified the charter of a new corporation, the Accessory Transit Company. In return for \$10,000 a year and 10 per cent of the net profits, Vanderbilt obtained the right to cross the Isthmus by coach and by river and lake steamers. To this end, he organized a carriage route from San Juan del Sur on the Pacific to Virgin Bay, service by lake steamer from Virgin Bay to San Carlos at the head of the San Juan River, and transport by coach and by river steamer thence to the Atlantic.<sup>8</sup> On his arrival in Nicaragua, the Commodore greatly perplexed the natives by driving a steamboat through the impassable Castillo Rapids of the San Juan River. The capitalist, to test the difficulties of local navigation, pressed the safety valve of the 150-foot "Central America" all the way down and sailed daintily past the mortal rocks.<sup>9</sup> Later he was to bewilder Nicaraguans in another, financial fashion. The Accessory Transit Company declared, the first business year, a dividend of two dollars on 40,000 shares of stock, but declined to forward to the credulous government at the Isthmus 10 per cent of the net profits. When a Nicaraguan agent protested in New York, the astute counsel for the Transit replied that since the little

nation was, for the present, a sovereign state, her representative could not interfere with a purely Nicaraguan corporation! <sup>10</sup>

The route promised, from its inception, international disputes as well as profits. Great Britain, after 1848, claimed a protectorate over San Juan del Sur. Late in 1851, as the "Prometheus" was sailing for New York, city authorities boarded the Vanderbilt liner with a process of attachment for port dues. An English brig-of-war fired a shot across the "Prometheus" bows, and Captain Churchill, under protest, satisfied the debt. <sup>11</sup>

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Since, in the spring of 1852, the adherents of George Law had organized a banquet, the *Herald* suggested a dinner to compliment the Commodore. <sup>12</sup> Presumably few passengers to California via Nicaragua would have graced a Vanderbilt Festival. Travelers on the "Prometheus" in the fall of the preceding year spoke of his "impudent and barefaced attempt to guile and defraud the public." After paying twice the advertised fee for transportation across the Isthmus, they resolved: "We have but little confidence in the integrity and honor of parties connected with the Vanderbilt Line, and none at all in their general agent, Mr. Vanderbilt, and we advise all parties who may be so unfortunate as to be brought in business contact with either to guard themselves by written contract." <sup>13</sup>

The traveling public does not appear to have held the staff of the Transit liners in high esteem. "The captain and officers, struck with utter paralysis, took not a step toward alleviating the condition of those thus suddenly precipitated upon an unknown and sparsely settled coast," complained a pas-



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senger of the "North America" which ran aground at Acapulco early in 1852. Best by drunkards and rioters, the shipwrecked waited in vain for any financial assistance from Cornelius Vanderbilt.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of the loss of the "North America," individuals, rather than the Accessory Transit Company, owned the steamships which connected the Nicaraguan ports with New York and San Francisco. Drew and Vanderbilt together held title to the vessel which ran aground at Acapulco.<sup>15</sup> Other ships were registered in the name of Brooks, Davis & Company; still others, the majority, were registered in the name of the Commodore. In August, Vanderbilt menaced the Transit with the threat of sending his steamers to California via Panama.<sup>16</sup> In September, he resigned as President.<sup>17</sup> But he eventually bullied the corporation into purchasing his liners at a pleasant price. On December 24 he wrote: "I will sell to your company the steamships Northern Light, Star of the West, Prometheus, Daniel Webster, Brother Jonathan, Pacific and Lewis, together with their furniture, for the sum of \$1,350,000; payable \$1,200,000 in cash, and \$150,000 in the bonds of your company, payable in one year from the date of the bill of sale. All the coal hulks and other fixtures, your company to take at cost, paying for them from the first earnings of the vessels." He added: "Should this proposition be accepted by your company, and they wish me to retain the agency of the line of ships for the next twelve months, I will do so at the usual commission." On December 27 his obedient fellow capitalists issued 40,000 shares of stock at \$30 to provide the necessary \$1,200,000 and engaged his services as agent in New York at 2½ per cent.<sup>18</sup>



While President of the Transit, the Commodore had approved the leasing of the "Independence" from two wily railroad speculators, Robert and G. L. Schuyler.<sup>19</sup> When, in the winter of 1853, this liner, overcrowded and uninsured, sailed from San Juan del Sur for San Francisco, many of her passengers, aware that she was leaking, doubted she would ever reach her destination. The "Independence" on February 16 smashed on a reef off Lower California. One hundred seventy-six perished, and her agonized captain acknowledged: "The scene was perfectly horrible and indescribable—men, women and children screeching, crying and drowning. I ordered the spars, hatches, tables and everything that would float to be thrown overboard, which was done, and they were immediately covered with people. About one hour after the ship struck the beach, she was in a perfect sheet of flame. The smokestack had fallen, the promenade deck forward had fallen, the flames were coming out of the sidelights, and it was impossible to stay on board any longer."<sup>20</sup>

On February 14, Cornelius Vanderbilt had rejoined the directorate of the Accessory Transit Company.<sup>21</sup> The calamity, it is important to realize, did not depress quotations in Nicaragua shares. The money article of the *Herald* spoke with fine calm of the disaster: the steamer did not belong to the company, and was about to be withdrawn.<sup>22</sup>

The Commodore, in 1851, proposed to carry the mails to California for \$19,000 a year less than Law and Aspinwall, but the United States Government declined his offer.<sup>23</sup> Yet if Vanderbilt failed to satisfy the requirements of the Post Office, he did not displease the traveling public altogether. His liners, which soon steamed from coast to coast in twenty-

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four days,<sup>24</sup> four days faster than competing vessels, drew traffic by violent reductions in rates. Most fortunately, the "Lewis" sank in the spring of 1853 with no loss of life whatever, although newspapers hinted that she was beyond repair at the time of her sale to the Transit Company.<sup>25</sup>

Early in 1853 an old acquaintance from Staten Island, Jacob Van Pelt, asked the Commodore if he had placed his affairs in order. "I have \$11,000,000," the steamboat king replied, "and I leave it better invested than any other \$11,000,000 in the United States. It is worth twenty-five per cent."<sup>26</sup> Vanderbilt had decided on an extravagance eloquent of his income: a Grand Tour of Europe on board a steam yacht costing \$500,000. James Gordon Bennett conceived of this personal ocean liner as a glorious advertisement for the nation. His *Herald* said: "The real character of our people has been misunderstood. What can the Czar of Russia know of our social life—of the general prosperity which prevails throughout the country—of the intelligence and comfortable condition of our industrial classes, and the refinement of those whose enterprise, industry and genius have placed them at the head of the social scale? It is only by personal observation that he and the other crowned heads can obtain a true knowledge of these facts; and though he may not visit us to obtain the required information, yet he will, in a very few months, have the opportunity of seeing one of our most distinguished and wealthy citizens in his own capital. . . . Although it is solely a personal matter, it partakes somewhat of a national character."<sup>27</sup> The Commodore easily imagined himself as an ambassador. "I have a little pride as an American," he wrote Hamilton Fish, "to sail over the



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waters of England and France, up the Baltic and through the Mediterranean, without a reflection of any kind that it is a voyage for gain.”<sup>28</sup>

“The swindling in the business of supplying steamers,” Cornelius Vanderbilt admitted, “is outrageous. If the captain is a smart man, he cheats me, and if he is a dull man, the dealers cheat him, so that in any event there is a swindling drawback.”<sup>29</sup> Such, in the millionaire’s own words, was the moral tone of the Accessory Transit Company. Nevertheless, as he made ready to leave the United States, he intrusted his interest in the corporation to two fellow-directors, Charles Morgan and C. K. Garrison. Morgan, originally a grocery clerk, had prospered in the steamship business from New York to Charleston. Garrison, once a cabin boy on a Hudson River sloop, had waxed rich from banking in Panama before he accepted, in March 1853, the agency of the Transit in San Francisco at an annual salary of \$60,000. “He is so smart,” an admirer of C. K. Garrison observed, “that it takes twenty men to watch him.”<sup>30</sup>

The Commodore, having disposed of the Staten Island Ferry for \$600,000,<sup>31</sup> was inhaling the expensive air of New York in this the year of the Crystal Palace Exhibition. “We are now on the very eve of the most transcendently brilliant era of fashion and amusement that this metropolis has ever yet witnessed,” proclaimed the *Herald* in recording the fever of Manhattan.<sup>32</sup> “The memories of all past seasons will fade away, lose their luster, and be utterly obliterated in the splendor of the coming one. Fashion is about to forsake her ancient places in the passé capitals of Europe, and establish her abode in this city of the Knickerbockers. The most costly



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and beautiful equipages that any republican people could desire to indulge in crowd *thick as blackberries* in Broadway; plush has suddenly risen into great demand, and private carriages not having a brace of gentlemen in livery would be now declared below the *ton*. The country was never so prosperous, money was never so plenty, and people were never so bent on enjoying themselves, since the days of Noah. A little panic now and again in Wall Street has only a momentary effect—it merely serves to give the fashionable and moneyed classes a short breathing time—and off they start again in the race of enjoyment and extravagance, with renewed ardor.”

## VI

Cornelius Vanderbilt had never been a strict observer of the Moravian tenets; now he selected a Baptist pastor to dignify his pleasure trip. He may have calculated that the devotion of this Doctor of Divinity, John Overton Choules, could be convenient, and that Bible readings could close afternoons of whist. The preacher consented to lead religious exercises, but he proved a difficult guest. “There was discipline on board that ship, sir,” he disclosed on his return to the United States. “Each man attended to his own business. The Commodore did the swearing, and I did the praying. So we never disagreed.”<sup>1</sup> Later, the divine penned the *Cruise of the Steam Yacht North Star*, a most indiscreet account of the voyage.

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

The "North Star" worthily represented eleven millions out at 25 per cent. The *Illustrated News* of New York, after admiring her beam (38 feet) and her length overall (270 feet), commented: <sup>2</sup> "What will the wealthy noblemen of England—the proprietors of sailing yachts of fifty and a hundred tons—say to a citizen of the United States appearing in their waters with a steamship yacht of twenty-five hundred tons burthen—a vessel large enough to carry the armament of a British seventy-four? We are sure that the English nobility and gentry will give the Commodore a reception commensurate with his rank as a merchant prince—one who goes abroad in a style not inferior to their own youthful sovereign. We predict a sensation, at the arrival of this vessel in Europe, second to that of no arrival they have ever had from any quarter of the globe."

The fittings of the "North Star" were, in effect, superb.<sup>3</sup> The walls of the dining saloon were of "ligneous marble," the panels of Naples granite. The ceiling enclosed medallion paintings of the essential Americans: Columbus, Washington, Franklin, Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. The main saloon, to which Vanderbilt would inevitably repair for his cigar, *gratified the eye*, the *Staten Islander* reported, and *ministered to luxurious ease*. The boiserie, in that withdrawing-room, were of satin and rosewood. The cabinet furniture and upholstery, supplied by the establishment of J. & J. W. Weeks, evoked the Age of Louis XV, and that new and elegant material, plush, inflated every sofa. The staterooms of the private liner were, of course, no less luxurious than the public rooms. Fastidious silk lambrequins and lace curtains veiled all the berths, while the toilet furniture exactly matched the

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colors of the hangings. Finally, one of Van Horne's steam heaters, a beautiful specimen of bronze trelliswork, richly gilded and marble-topped, maintained a pleasant temperature throughout the yacht.

Vanderbilt was evidently anxious to travel without epileptic embarrassments, for he left Cornelius Jeremiah in America with his invalid sister Frances. Excepting those two children, the capitalist transported his entire family to Europe. Besides Sophia, he included \* his daughter Phoebe Jane and her husband, James Cross; his daughter Catherine; his favorite son George; his daughter Ethelinda and her husband, Daniel B. Allen; his daughter Eliza and her husband, George Osgood; his daughter Emily and her husband, William K. Thorn; his granddaughter Louisa Thorn; his daughter Sophia and her husband, Daniel Torrance; his daughter Maria Alicia and her husband, N. B. LaBau; Marie Louise and her husband, Horace Clark; William Henry and his wife; his physician, Dr. Jared Linsly, and Mrs. Linsly; Rev. and Mrs. Choules; and Mrs. Asa Eldridge, wife of the commander of the yacht. To satisfy every need of those passengers, the Commodore secured the services of Mr. Larner of the Cunard Line as steward, and those of Mr. Keefe of the Racket Club as purser.

Vanderbilt deeply regretted that the senility of his mother and her infirmities forbade her to visit the capitals of the Old World. On the night of May 20, as his private liner headed past Staten Island out to sea, he ordered a military salute in her honor. Then rocket after rocket soared into the moonlit,

\* At this date, his offspring numbered twelve. One child had died.



cloudless sky to illuminate her humble cottage. Five hundred admirers of the steamboat king, who were accompanying him on board as far as Sandy Hook, applauded that filial display.<sup>4</sup>

Later that evening, the Commodore came upon William Henry, who was inhaling a cigar as he gazed on the faint glimmer of New York City. "Billy," interrupted the older Vanderbilt, "I wish you would give up that smoking of yours; I'll give you \$10,000 if you'll do it." "You need not give me any money, father," the younger Vanderbilt replied. "Your wish is sufficient." And he cast his puro into the Atlantic. It was at that moment that the Commodore reached into his pocket and drew out a costly Havana, which he forgetfully lit in the very presence of his son.<sup>5</sup>

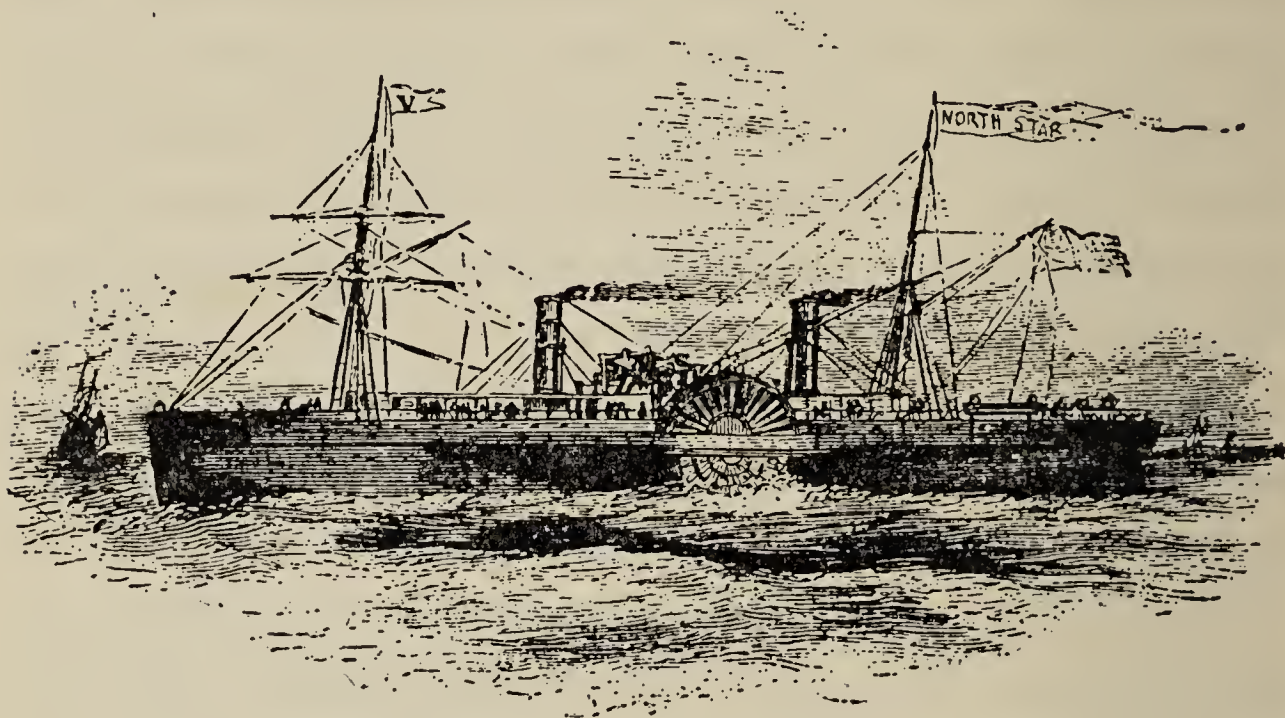
"As my journey would be a long one," Vanderbilt wrote a friend from Southampton on the first of June, "and as I meant to have the ship in such order on our arrival in a foreign country as to be a credit to our *Yankee Land*, I did not wish to hazard this by making any attempt to obtain high rates of speed. My firemen being mostly *greenhands* picked off the wharf at the moment of starting, and knowing but little of making a fire, I thought it prudent," the millionaire admitted, "to let things be for a few days.

"I do not know how to rate her capacity for speed if driven for a short passage; as it was, the passage was made in 10 days, 8 hours and 40 minutes from pilot to pilot. This makes the trip shorter than I meant to have made it, but as we were delayed in New York, I concluded to gratify the ladies to make up the lost time by a little speed. *She worked*

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

*like a charm,*" her owner concluded. "Coal consumed, 521 tons." <sup>6</sup>

The Commodore, who cherished a secret fondness for woodcock, demanded as much of his ovens as of his engines. "In relation to the style of living on board the steamer,"



THE "NORTH STAR"  
(Courtesy N. Y. Public Library)

Choules confessed, overcome by his host's sumptuous dinners, "I may say that, with all our knowledge of the splendid accommodations of the ship, yet none of the party expected the luxurious fare with which we were provided. I hazard no contradiction from any of my messmates, when I say that on our voyage from New York to Southampton, our table was equal to that of any hotel in America, and the desserts rivalled in richness and variety anything I have witnessed in the Astor, Metropolitan or Saint Nicholas." <sup>7</sup>

Unhappily, the well-fed clergyman determined to repay Vanderbilt for his hospitality by introducing him to as many



curates as monuments. In Southampton, the divine presented the steamboat king to the independent minister, Adkins, surely "the noblest looking man in England." In London, the preacher permitted the tourists to gaze at the Tower, Saint Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, but he led them, their first Sunday in the capital, to the chapel of the celebrated dissenter Noël.<sup>8</sup> The leisureless capitalist, even in his rooms at the Saint James Hotel, cannot have examined the newspapers. Possibly William Henry pointed out these paragraphs of the *Daily News*:

#### A WORD ABOUT MR. VANDERBILT'S YACHT

An American merchant has just arrived in London, on a pleasure trip. He has come by train from Southampton, and left his private yacht behind him in dock at that port. This yacht is a monster steamer. Her saloon is described as larger and more magnificent than that of any ocean steamer afloat, and it is said to surpass in splendor the Queen's yacht. The walls of the dining room are clothed with a new material, resembling marble and malachite. The building of the vessel alone cost one hundred thousand pounds. The expense of keeping it up is three hundred pounds a week. Listening to the details of the grandeur of this new floating palace, it seems natural to think upon the riches of her owner, and to associate him with the Cosimo de' Medicis, the Andrea Fuggers, the Jacques Coeurs and the Richard Whittingtons of the past, but this is wrong. Mr. Vanderbilt is a sign of the times. The mediaeval merchants just named stood out in bold relief from the great society of their day. Mr. Vanderbilt is a legitimate product of his country—the Medicis, Fuggers and others were exceptional cases in theirs. They were fortunate monopolists who, by means of capital and crushing privileges, sucked up the wealth of the community. They were not a healthy growth, but a kind of enormous wen upon the body politic. It took Florence nearly fifteen centuries to produce one Cosimo, and she never brought forth another. America was not



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

known four centuries ago; yet she turns out her Vanderbilts, small and large, every year.

It is time that the millionaire should cease to be ashamed of having made his own fortune. It is time that *parvenu* should be looked upon as a word of honor. It is time that the middle classes should take the place that is their own in the world they have made. The middle classes have made the modern world. The Montmorencis, the Howards, the Percys, made the past world—and they had their reward. Let them give place to better men. It is not the strong arm which now founds nations, or makes them great. The work has been taken out of the hands of the mighty in war, and given to those who are strong in council, to the tamers of the great forces of nature. These must now take up their position. These must assert it, and scorn to put up with the faded distinctions that formed the glory of the ruling classes centuries back. . . . We want the Vanderbilts of England to feel what they are and to show it. . . .<sup>9</sup>

The distinguished banker George Peabody would surely not have countenanced the abolition of faded distinctions, but he was one of the first to call upon the Commodore. No one had done more than this New Englander to interest English investors in our securities. At a time when our credit was damaged in London, this financier, by his own integrity, had led the City to believe again in the solidity of the American future. Now he conferred a signal honor on the steamboat magnate—his box at the Opera. Vanderbilt and his fellow tourists sat through *Les Huguenots* at Covent Garden without paying undue deference to the Royal Family. “Prince Albert,” one of the party recorded, “is a tall stout-looking man. His appearance was anything but aristocratic. We searched scrutinizingly among the noble circles to discover something in form or feature marking the stamp of hereditary nobility, but in vain. Divested of their rank and privileges, they were only common clay after all.”<sup>10</sup>

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

Not long after the operatic evening, our Minister at the Court of Saint James, the Hon. Joseph R. Ingersoll, followed Peabody's precedent, and invited Vanderbilt to a *levée*. "The attendance was large," Choules recalled, "and the display of diamonds most brilliant." Yet the *soirée* the Lord Mayor gave at Mansion House eclipsed, in the preacher's eyes, the party at the American Legation. The Lord Mayor, Thomas Challis, was not only an outstanding hide merchant, but a prominent dissenter as well.<sup>11</sup>

Alas! Neither *levée* nor *soirée* indicated that the Vanderbilts were entering the polite world. In his account of the cruise, the malicious Choules published this invitation and all the regrets the Commodore endured.

### THE MAYOR, MERCHANTS AND TRADERS OF SOUTHAMPTON

request the pleasure of the Rev. Dr. & Mrs. Choules' company at a DEJEUNER, on Monday, 13 June, 1853, at the Royal Victoria Assembly Rooms in honor of the visit of

### COMMODORE VANDERBILT

in his splendid steam yacht *North Star*.

A capital brass band was stationed that afternoon on the Green at Southampton outside the Assembly Rooms, but the distinguished guests expected did not arrive.

Nearly every exalted personality declined. The American Colony, with the possible exception of George Peabody whose excuse was apparently valid, followed the cautious social policy of our Legation, while the English stood even more aloof.<sup>12</sup>

Upon leaving British waters, the personal liner of the

Commodore cruised to Cronstadt. There, Grand Duke Constantine, quite careless of his social standing, dignified the "North Star" with a visit. The title, bewildered by such an achievement in shipbuilding, asked that the officers of the Russian Navy be allowed to make charts of the majestic yacht. His request granted, Constantine insisted on lending Vanderbilt one of the very carriages of the Emperor. It was in that imperial equipage that the steamboat king viewed the Palace of Peterhof.<sup>13</sup>

Napoléon III, preoccupied by his designs on the Crimea, disappointed the tourists by not attending a Grand Military Review at Versailles. Nevertheless, the Commodore attempted great elegance in Paris. He stopped at the Hôtel du Rhin on the Place Vendôme, and he frequented the establishments of the reigning tailor, Woodman, and the reigning bootmaker, Forr. The while, he kept his holdings in mind. Wary of over-expansion, he discouraged certain noblemen in trade who implored his assistance in founding a steamship line to the United States.<sup>14</sup> "Billy," the millionaire may have chuckled, at the departure of the French investors, "never tell anyone what you are going to do until after you've done it."

In America, the directors of the Accessory Transit Company were following Vanderbilt's maxim to the letter. On June 1, Charles Morgan usurped the agency in New York. On July 29, the *Herald* reported that "Trouble is anticipated upon the return of Commodore Vanderbilt. It appears that when he agreed to put boats upon the route, the Transit Company contracted to pay him twenty per cent of the gross receipts of the Transit across Nicaragua. This payment was



made regularly to Mr. Vanderbilt up to the time he left in his yacht for Europe. Since, the Company have refused to make payments to Vanderbilt's agent, and there is very little doubt but that upon the Commodore's return, summary measures will be taken to collect his demand." Unconcerned, the Transit officials replied: "It is quite true that since the departure of Mr. Vanderbilt the Company have not paid him the twenty per cent on the gross receipts of the Transit route, for the plain and simple reason that in their belief he is largely indebted to the company, it having been found impossible to obtain a statement of the accounts of the agency during the time he acted as agent for the steamers of the Company." <sup>15</sup>

In the interval, the "North Star" had steamed into the Mediterranean. Landing at Leghorn, the travelers took the cars for Florence, where Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt sat for their portraits in the studios of American sculptors. Hart, then at work on a bust of Clay for the ladies of Virginia, carved Sophia's features. Powers, remembered today for "The Greek Slave," executed the Commodore's visage. Choules revealed himself an art-loving clergyman, for he appreciated the privilege of penetrating Powers' atelier. "The artist," he related, "was delighted with the head and figure, and he was evidently engaged *con amore*; his subject sat charmed with the originality of his eloquent conversation. If the result was not a perfect representation of a head of rare power and command, I am no judge, and we were all of us mistaken. Long as marble lasts will that face evince its striking force and power." On their return to Leghorn, the tourists discovered that their yacht had aroused the sus-

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pitions of the Austrian authorities. Fortunately the capitalist convinced the police that his liner concealed neither Kossuth nor ammunition for insurrectionists.<sup>16</sup>

At last, on September 23, the "North Star" reached Sandy Hook, and anchored a few hours later off Staten Island. Once again, the millionaire's mother received a full military salute from his superb steam yacht.<sup>17</sup> Phoebe did not witness her son's other glories. Cornelius Van Derbilt had passed away on the 20th of May, 1832. On the 22nd of January, 1854, she followed her husband to the grave.

On learning that his associates had betrayed his confidence, the Commodore resorted of course to unbelievable profanity. Then, realizing that abuse was insufficient, the steamboat king dictated one of the sublime letters in the history of business. To Morgan and Garrison he wrote:

GENTLEMEN:

You have undertaken to cheat me. I won't sue you, for the law is too slow. I'll ruin you.

C. VANDERBILT.<sup>18</sup>

## VII

*The New York Herald* suspected that the quarrel of the shipping magnates could provide good copy. James Gordon Bennett reprinted in his money article the card the Transit officials had released in July, and added that ". . . as soon as Commodore Vanderbilt gets located again among us, it is expected he will furnish some exculpatory reply." <sup>1</sup>

“I am not disposed to question,” Cornelius Vanderbilt answered two days later, “that the statement . . . calls for a few words in explanation. To say nothing of the cowardice which, in my absence in a foreign country, dictated the calumnious statement referred to, it is none the less unfortunate that it was utterly false.” The Commodore continued: “It is altogether untrue that any accounts which could be rendered were ever denied them.

“My object in accepting the agency of the steamships for the year during which I undertook it was chiefly to enable me to rescue the amount of the company’s unpaid indebtedness to me, and I suppose I do them but justice in saying that their sole object in terminating the agency in my absence was if possible to avoid its payment.

“I am exceedingly adverse to this intrusion upon the public of a private pecuniary controversy, and I very much regret that the individuals at the time composing the direction of the company should not have had the good sense and justice to keep their slanders out of the public prints. They may have felt themselves justified upon the ground that their intention was simply to deceive the stockholders or momentarily inflate their stock, but such an excuse I regard as altogether unsatisfactory. My rights against the company,” and here Vanderbilt placed a curious confidence in the courts, “will be determined in due time by the judgment of the legal tribunals, to whom, rather than to the public, good taste at least required that the company should have made their appeal.”<sup>2</sup>

To those claims the Transit officials issued this response: “The directors of this company having noticed the letter of



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Mr. C. Vanderbilt which appeared in this morning's paper desire namely to say that when the accounts and vouchers pertaining to Mr. Vanderbilt's agency shall be received, the company will be ready and willing to pay him any balance that may be found due. All the company now asks is that these accounts may be rendered." <sup>3</sup>

That card did not conclude the argument, for on the 20th of October, the Office of the Transit Company announced that ". . . three times Mr. Vanderbilt has proposed arbitration as a mode of settling accounts. To this the company have never objected, but have always insisted, as they now insist, that Mr. Vanderbilt should first render his accounts to them that they might know whether there was anything to settle by arbitration. These accounts they have frequently requested, and latterly by formal resolution demanded of Mr. Vanderbilt. To this demand he replied that he would furnish them as soon as they were finished by the copyist in whose hands they then were. Since then, no account has been received from him excepting a mere copy of his cash book. Full accounts have been again requested by order of the Board of Directors to which no reply has been received. As this company have hitherto failed by their own efforts to procure from Mr. Vanderbilt an accounting of his agency, they now formally request him to commence a suit against them, by attachment of their property or otherwise, or proceed with that which he has already commenced the argument of." <sup>4</sup>

The directors of the Accessory Transit Company were indeed idle-minded if they thumbed, like their clerks, the pages of Vanderbilt's cash book, or if they consulted with their attorneys on the decent legal measures. The Commodore

obliged by bringing suit; <sup>5</sup> then he retaliated with truly telling effect. Adding the "North Star" to the "Yankee Blade" and "Uncle Sam" of one E. Mills, he formed an Opposition Line to California via Panama which unnerved not only the Transit but the United States and Pacific Mails as well.<sup>6</sup> Declaring a frightful rate war, he asked only \$35 for a steerage passage from coast to coast.<sup>7</sup> As his ships connected New York with San Francisco in only twenty-two days, all three established companies quickly capitulated. In September 1854, the steamboat king transferred the "North Star" to the United States Mail for \$400,000,<sup>8</sup> and disposed of the "Yankee Blade" and "Uncle Sam" to the Transit and Pacific lines. Morgan and Garrison satisfied his painful claims, and the Nicaragua company paid no dividends to stockholders on the 1st of January 1855.<sup>9</sup>

Daniel B. Allen, long the Commodore's assistant in the steamship business, cannot have shared in the settlement. In the spring, he pressed charges against Morgan and Garrison for mismanaging the company, for speculating in its stock, and for conciliating his father-in-law! <sup>10</sup> Vanderbilt, meanwhile, was regaining his ascendancy over the Accessory Transit. On December 26, 1855, he returned to the Board of Directors; on the following February 6, he resumed the Presidency.<sup>11</sup> Yet the millionaire was uneasy: he had not accomplished the *total* ruin of his adversaries. "I am desirous of having no difficulty with the ships," he wrote, the moment he was President, to the U. S. District Attorney in New York. "Any move you may point out to save trouble that may arise, I will most cheerfully join you in. Therefore, if at any time

you see or hear of anything wrong, you will always find me ready to make it right as far as in my power.”

Trouble arose soon enough. Morgan and Garrison, who had been plotting many months to undermine his holdings, provoked political anxieties in Nicaragua. The little nation had secured her freedom from Spain in 1821, but, as the elections of 1853 conclusively proved, had not yet attained a stable government. The successful, Legitimist candidate for the Presidency, Fruto Chamorro, banished his inconvenient democratic opponent, Federico Castellón, whereupon the exile rallied a band of malcontents in Honduras, and undertook the invasion of his native land. This unhappy confusion, the harebrained patrioteer William Walker reasoned, was merely an opportunity for military glory. Walker, an effeminate graduate of the University of Nashville, had adopted filibustering as a career after trying his hand, ineffectually, at medicine, law, and journalism. Recently, he had been discomfited in an absurd attack on the Mexican province of Sonora. Now, his silly brain addled by Castellón's aide Byron Cole, he dreamed of leading an expeditionary force to the relief of the exiled candidate for President. On the 4th of March, 1855, the amateur generalissimo and forty-eight other adventurers sailed for Nicaragua. On the 13th of October an actual victory surprised his efforts; troops under his command captured the Legitimist capital, Granada. Morgan and Garrison, it must be admitted, were not altogether innocent of his success in seizing the city. Two days before the sally, the Transit agent C. J. Macdonald presented Walker with \$20,000 and a steamer to transport his men. It is not apparent that Cornelius Vanderbilt, in New York, sanctioned



this use of the company's funds or the loan of the company's steamboat. Indeed it is likely that the Commodore suspected C. K. Garrison's proposal to bring Walker reinforcements at the generous rate of \$20 the head.

Once Walker's cause prevailed, the curious liberality of the San Francisco agent was explained by an edict. On the 18th of February, 1856, Nicaragua revoked the charter and seized the property of the Accessory Transit Company, in the interest of course of Messrs. Morgan and Garrison. The amateur revolutionist was far from careless in proclaiming those decrees; he delayed their publication until after the departure of an Accessory steamer for the United States. Hence the Commodore did not learn of the revocation in time to prevent the sailing, on February 27, of another shipful of recruits from New Orleans. "Ignorant and prejudiced people," Walker afterward declared, "have said that the property of the companies was confiscated; but this is not true. The seizure was in the language of the civil law prevailing in Nicaragua, a provision for the purpose of securing the payment of the debt due from the companies to the government. And in order to preserve the property, it was in the meantime placed in the hands of persons giving the necessary bonds." <sup>12</sup>

Whether the seizure was in the language of the civil law or not, the freebooter revoked the charter on dubious grounds. Walker claimed that the Transit Company had not constructed the railroad, or rail and carriage road, which the franchise imposed; conveniently, he forgot that those undertakings were not to be completed before September 1873. The generalissimo denied that the Transit had made the annual payments of \$10,000; apparently, he did not wish to

acknowledge that the Company had forwarded the sum from 1849 to 1854, and was only withholding \$10,000 in 1855 in order to ascertain the claims of certain New York agents of the Nicaraguan Government. The politico insisted that the Transit owed 10 per cent of the net profits; he must have chosen to ignore that in November 1855 the demand of the State of Nicaragua amounted to no more than \$40,000. Commissioners were discussing the settlement of that question at the very moment he abrogated the franchise of the Accessory Company.<sup>13</sup> Such realities, however, never preoccupied William Walker. On February 23, his newspaper, *El Nicaraguense*, rather than examine the repeal of the charter, accused Vanderbilt of suspicious dealings with William Aspinwall. "The Accessory Transit Company has not only forfeited its bond, but its honor is held in slight esteem in the State at present. We are in possession of convincing proof that the company has not only acted dishonestly, but has been guilty of treason, if an incorporated body can be charged with such a crime. A new game was made before the hand was dealt out, and today Messrs. Aspinwall and Vanderbilt are losers on the deal. Both of the last-mentioned gentlemen—grand speculators in steamship and railroad stocks—are now interested in the Panama Railroad stock. There is a capital of \$11,000,000 in that enterprise which at present pays merely a nominal percentage. In order to get out of that, they are now planning to break down the Nicaraguan Line and thus drive passengers via Panama. We have no doubt that if this government would connive at the proceeding, Vanderbilt and Aspinwall would ultimately succeed in inflating and selling the Panama stock which they would invest



in the Nicaragua Line, but we have no disposition to become a party to such a speculation.”<sup>14</sup>

“I deem it a duty,” the Commodore announced on the 17th of March, “I owe to the public, to the country and to the Transit Company, to remain quiet, by letting the ships of the company lay at their wharves until our government has sufficient time to examine and look into the outrage committed upon their property. In the meantime, as I do not consider passengers or the property of American citizens safe on the transit of the Isthmus, I cannot be instrumental in inducing either to take the passage.”<sup>15</sup>

Brokers were already unloading Nicaragua stock. Transit shares, quoted at 22½ on the 13th, declined to 13 in five days.

But Vanderbilt, by canceling the sailings of the Transit liners, isolated Walker for six weeks. In vain did Garrison send ships from San Francisco; agents of the Commodore intercepted the vessels and directed their course to Panama. When, on April 8, Charles Morgan was able to dispatch the “Orizaba” from New York, a curiously awkward passenger, one Hosea Birdsall, begged for the intervention at San Juan del Norte of the British man-of-war “Eurydice.” Happily for the generalissimo, Her Majesty’s Commander Taileton refused to deny recruits the right to enter Nicaragua.

On March 17, and again on March 26, the Commodore protested to Secretary of State Marcy against “this great and violent outrage upon the rights of American citizens . . . in the unlawful seizure of a large amount of property”; notwithstanding, the United States Government did not intervene.<sup>16</sup> The while, Walker maintained an irresponsible atti-



tude toward the Transit debt. Although he permitted Domingo de Goicuria to enter into negotiations with Vanderbilt, he deprived his emissary of any authority. The Commodore, evidently anxious to reopen the route, offered \$100,000 the day his first ship sailed for San Juan del Norte, and \$150,000 in the next twelve months. "You will please not trouble yourself about the Transit Company," the filibuster directed his representative. "As the government has given you no powers, you cannot of course promise anything in its behalf." Federico Castellón having obligingly died of the cholera, William Walker, on the 12th of July, rose to the Presidency of Nicaragua.

This election, and the inactivity of our State Department, decided Vanderbilt. He alone would destroy Walker, and with Walker, Morgan and Garrison. In the summer, he persuaded the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, San Salvador, and Costa Rica to build a defensive alliance against the new administration in Nicaragua. In the fall, he ordered William R. C. Webster and Sylvanus Spencer to lead and organize invading forces. Webster, an Englishman, resented the spurious sovereignty of the amateur revolutionist. Spencer, a Transit stockholder, held him to account for lost dividends.

In December, the U. S. District Attorney in New York questioned the Commodore regarding "a hostile military expedition against the republic of Venezuela [sic]." "I have no knowledge whatever," the doughty steamboat king replied, "of any such intended expedition, nor is it true that I have undertaken to furnish it aid of any description." Apparently, the report was circulating that he and Walker

might be reconciled! "Permit me to say further," he continued, "that I have not failed to observe that my name has been associated with various individuals who are known to be connected with the filibustering scheme of which the republic of Nicaragua is now the arena. I am at a loss to account for the conduct of the parties through whose agency this great injustice has been done me, unless they may have supposed that filibustering is to be made respectable by the association of respectable names with those of the men who are notoriously concerned in its enterprises. Let me say, once for all, that there is not the slightest foundation for any of these imputations, and that I have as little sympathy with filibustering, when it takes the form (as in the case of Nicaragua) of a military invasion of a neighboring republic, as when it assumes the more familiar, but not more atrocious shape of burglary and larceny upon the property of our citizens. May I beg, sir, that you will give no credit to any of the rumors in which my name has been involved; and that you will accept this assurance that I shall, under no circumstances, give my countenance to any violation of public laws, or lend any aid to any invasion of our neighboring republics." <sup>17</sup>

On Christmas Eve, however, the confident Commodore released this message to New York newspapers: "Having perceived that the steamship *Prometheus*, belonging to the Accessory Transit Company, was advertised to be sold this day, under process of the United States District Court, I authorized a person to attend the sale, and gave him instructions to what extent to bid. He purchased her for the sum of \$10,011, in my name and in my account. Present appear-



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ances indicate a realization of my hopes that the Company will be rapidly restored to their rights, franchises and property upon the Isthmus of Nicaragua which had been so unjustly invaded. For this reason, I have deemed it to be my duty to make an effort to preserve the means of availing myself of the opportunity to recommence operations. When that time comes, such material as I may have on hand to put it in operation, I shall furnish, giving each stockholder the right in proportion to his stock to participate with me at cost in re-establishing a line.”<sup>18</sup>

The appearances were rapidly improving. On December 16, Spencer and Webster wrested from Walker Hipp's Point, an essential garrison at the junction of the San Juan and Serapiqui Rivers. Then, having taken San Juan del Norte, Vanderbilt's generals moved toward Fort San Carlos. By New Year's Day, the Commodore controlled the main link of the Transit route.

Although Cornelius Vanderbilt required only two weeks to undo the military reputation of William Walker, the ineffectual general remained, pathetically, in Nicaragua until the 1st of May, when he surrendered to Commander Davis of the U.S.S. "Saint Mary's." Later in the year, in spite of the fact that Morgan and Garrison were now without the funds to foster his erratic ambitions, the amateur revolutionist attempted a second silly attack on San Juan del Norte. This time, the Commodore dispensed with hiring a private army. Instead, he indicated to the State Department that the situation called for the Marines. A detachment disarmed and deported the useless filibuster.

These two signal failures in Nicaragua, it is interesting to



note, did not deter Walker from other adventuring in Central America. He fell before a firing squad in Honduras in 1860. It is likely, however, that Vanderbilt's use of the United States Marines, in addition to the armies of Honduras, San Salvador, and Costa Rica, disheartened Morgan and Garrison. They did not contradict the Commodore again.

When business men contended, after Walker's departure, for the Nicaragua franchise, Morgan and Garrison withdrew, to allow H. G. Stebbins to stand alone against Vanderbilt's displeasure. Stebbins, who had acquired the old Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal rights, proved to be a mediocre opponent. In June 1857 he secured a contract from the Nicaraguan Minister in Washington, Izarri, but the Commodore protested immediately and immoderately, and by January 1858 the authorities at Granada revoked the grant. In March, they returned the concession to Cornelius Vanderbilt. The Accessory Transit Company, strange to relate, never exercised that privilege. The Commodore canceled every sailing and allowed all trade to California to pass via Panama on rival lines. While it is possible that most shipping magnates were worldly enough to suspect the reason for this inactivity, it is probable that the general public did not comprehend the quiescence of the Transit route until June 1858, at the time of a discussion in the U. S. Senate relative to the subsidies of the United States and Pacific Mail Lines.<sup>19</sup>

"You give \$900,000 a year to carry the mails to California," Senator Toombs told other legislators, "and Vanderbilt compels the contractors to give him \$56,000 a month to keep quiet. That is the effect of your subventions. . . . By a superior skill and energy [he] compelled them for a long

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time to disgorge \$40,000 a month, and now \$56,000 a month. The effect of your subventions is to give the service to a worthless set of speculators. They pay lobby men, they pay agencies, they go to the law, because everybody is to have everything, and this Sloo contract has been in chancery for years. The result of this system is that here comes a man, in his own right a man, as old Vanderbilt seems to be, I never saw him, but his operations have excited my admiration, and he runs right at them, and says: *disgorge this plunder*. He is the kingfish that is robbing the small plunderers that come around the capitol. He does not come here for that purpose, but he says: *fork over \$56,000 a month of the money to me that I may lie in port with my ships*, and they do it."

Beginning in March 1856, the Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company found that it would be expedient to pay Cornelius Vanderbilt \$30,000 a month for relinquishing the right to open the Nicaragua Transit. The United States Mail imitated that decision by paying \$10,000 a month. Later, the lines agreed to raise the installments from \$40,000 to \$56,000 a month. If, from time to time, a malevolent stockholder resorted to the law in the hope of sharing in the Commodore's princely revenues, he discovered, to his chagrin, that the Accessory Transit Company, incorporated in Nicaragua, could not be sued in an American court.<sup>20</sup> Vanderbilt, meanwhile, was purchasing the steamships of the company at valuations he alone determined. The receiver of the corporation did not bring a successful suit to recover the missing assets until 1863.<sup>21</sup> The Commodore might well proclaim: "I have always taken a great deal of pride in doing my work in such a way as to add to the ornamental display of the city."<sup>22</sup>



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Ever ready to amuse himself with the property of the Accessory Transit Company, Vanderbilt in the winter of 1857 was weighing the sale of the S.S. "Cortes" to Peruvian revolutionaries.<sup>23</sup> In the spring, he was contemplating a steamship line to Ireland. "A dignitary of our Church," an Irish visitor to New York wrote to a friend, "kindly accompanied me a few days ago to the office of Commodore Vanderbilt, considered, I believe, the Rothschild of New York. This gentleman told us that he then had eight first class steamers disengaged, and was willing to let one of them on hire for a sum I do not judge prudent at present to mention, and not only that, he would be a stockholder himself, and act as director, and sell ten thousand pounds of stock for us."<sup>24</sup>

Alas! newspaper publicity was tempering the generosity of the United States and Pacific Mails. "If there ever was a man," *The New York Times* decided, "who has made his own way in the world, it is Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. He has made his own way, and nobody's else. . . . Like those old German barons who, from their eyries along the Rhine, swooped down upon the commerce of the noble river, and wrung tribute from every passenger that floated by, Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, with all the steamers of the Accessory Transit Company held in his leash, has insisted that the Pacific Company should pay him toll, taken of all America that had business with California and the Southern Sea, and the Pacific Company have submitted to his demand. There are honorable and high-minded merchants, American gentlemen of the best stamp, among the directors who have thus bowed the knee to this man's dictation . . . they must doubt-



less have writhed under the consciousness of the true part that they were playing.”<sup>25</sup>

By the fall of 1859, neither the Pacific nor United States Mail was supplying the Commodore with any monthly income. Accordingly, on the 3rd of October, the capitalist organized a new line to California via Panama, the Atlantic and Pacific Steam Ship Company.<sup>26</sup> He assumed the Presidency, while Marshall O. Roberts, Moses Taylor, and other solid men entered the Board of Directors.<sup>27</sup> For \$450,000, Vanderbilt purchased C. K. Garrison's half interest in the “Orizaba,” the “Cortes,” the “Uncle Sam,” and the “Sierra Nevada.”<sup>28</sup> Then, upon acquiring the steamers of the United States Mail Line, the Atlantic and Pacific Company announced sailings every ten days from New York to Panama, leaving the Pacific route to the Pacific Mail.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, the California trade was no longer grandly lucrative. The United States Government, on October 1, 1859, granted the Commodore \$150,000 for nine months' mail service to the Pacific Coast, but on the expiration of the contract, transferred the mails to the Overland Route.<sup>30</sup> The while, bullion shipments were declining. Cargoes of treasure, which totaled forty-one millions in 1855, declined to thirty-four millions in 1860.<sup>31</sup> And travelers to San Francisco would quibble now at leaky lifeboats.<sup>32</sup> In the fall of 1859, the captious passengers of the “North Star” (the steam yacht was again a Vanderbilt liner) pronounced her unsafe and refused to embark for New York. The *Times* caviled: “How many thousand victims are yet to be sacrificed in that reckless speculation which presents itself in the respectable and dignified garb of commerce?”<sup>33</sup>

The *Times*, to be sure, seldom honored the achievements of the steamboat king. In the spring of 1855, certain independent Senators in New Jersey proposed the Commodore for President of the United States. Henry Raymond's newspaper held that his nomination would be as objectionable as that of the rival steamship operator, George Law. Law was the favorite of many members of the Know Nothing party, yet the *Times* slighted both shipping magnates.<sup>34</sup> "They have neither done aught that is great to be rewarded, nor much that is good to be remembered. Of the alphabet of the forum, they are wholly oblivious, and of services or success in the field entirely guiltless. We may add that we have sundry other rich men in the city of New York, if money is to be the standard, and some who, having made their wealth in old-fashioned commerce, without thought of jobbing in ferry privileges or transit routes, or crowding, at exorbitant prices, to suffocation and disease, their California passenger ships, would be equally, if not more acceptable, to our people than either the steamboat candidates."

Meantime, the Commodore was answering his New Jersey adherents in his most elevated English:<sup>35</sup> "I am not now, I have never at any time been desirous of political or personal distinction, and I am so constituted that I cannot well appreciate the pleasures which allure those who make the attainment of places of honor the object of their assertions. . . . The earlier period of my life was devoted to unremitting toil, while my later years are severely burdened by the multiplied cares which my varied pursuits have engendered. To this hour, therefore, I have never found the time to indulge one single dream of ambition, and I have already attained to that

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period in life when more simple realities take the place of the hopes and aspirations of youth. . . . In the limited circle where I am known, I am often styled a successful man, and I am well satisfied that all the results that have attended the labors of my life are attributable to the simple rule which I early adopted to mind my own business. I know of no distinction from that rule which is applicable to the business of a great nation; nor can I suggest one more appropriate for the foreign policy of the American people.”

The nation favored Buchanan, rather than any business man, for President, but the *Herald* suggested the nomination not only of Vanderbilt and Law, but of E. K. Collins as well.<sup>36</sup> (The latter magnate operated a steamship line to Europe.) “Yea, there are three men in this city of New York of the highest administrative qualities, although without any pretensions as statesmen, politicians, party wire-pullers, or intriguing and frothy lawyers. These solid men are George Law, Edward K. Collins and Cornelius Vanderbilt. Immediately identified with that great material and moral agent of advancing civilization, the steam engine, cylinders eight feet in diameter, these men stand in the front rank of the progressive movement of the age. Talk of such men being unqualified for the White House! The thing is absurd. Talk of tinkering and hair-splitting lawyers and old stagecoach fogies as better qualified than these steam engine and live oak men for the Presidency! Preposterous idea! Clear the track for the locomotive!”



## V I I I

“We all know Cornelius Vanderbilt, in person or by reputation,” Representative William Smith of Virginia reminded the House. “He has made fame for himself, and has also added to that of our country. I know him well, and he has no superior in the line of his profession. His late yacht expedition is a matter of pride and glory to our country, and was the admiration and wonder of all the countries of Europe. The magnificence of his movements was not believed, in many of the despotisms of Europe, to be that of a private individual, and in consequence of the feeling that it was a governmental movement, he fell under the surveillance of one, at least, of the countries of the Old World.”<sup>1</sup> On the 15th of February, 1855, the ornamental mouth of Congressman Smith was announcing that the Commodore required a subsidy to enter the transatlantic steamship trade. A lesser millionaire might have hesitated to dispatch liners to Europe: Morgan and Garrison had been humbled, rather than crippled. But Vanderbilt, aware that the Crimean War was dislocating the British Steam Fleet, pronounced this the moment to diversify his holdings. Pioneer steamboat operators had already established efficient service to the channel ports; he would profit from their experience.

The “Savannah” in 1819 was the first steamship to cross the Atlantic. She depended, however, on steam for only

eighty hours of her twenty-seven day voyage from her home port to Liverpool. Other early steamers were quite as experimental. In 1838, the "Sirius" and the "Great Western," both of British registry, completed crossings under steam, but maintained no schedules. Then, in 1839, the Admiralty bestowed on Samuel Cunard of Halifax an annual subsidy of 60,000 pounds for biweekly mail service from Boston to Liverpool via Halifax. The grant commenced the Cunard Line, which provided the first trustworthy steam transportation to Europe. The Cunard liners, beginning in 1848, were calling at New York one week, Boston the next. Conveniently, the Admiralty is said to have increased the annual subvention for weekly sailings to 175,000 pounds.<sup>2</sup>

Although Americans were intent all this while on impairing English profits, it remained for E. K. Collins, in 1850, to offer any competition to Samuel Cunard. Collins, who amassed a fortune through the Dramatic Line of sailing packets to Liverpool, pleaded as early as 1841 that Congress subsidize steam transportation. At last, on the 1st of November, 1847, he obtained an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for four first-class seagoing steamships capable of naval use in time of war.<sup>3</sup> The fund attracted the capital of James and Stewart Brown, W. S. Wetmore, and Elisha Riggs, who co-operated in founding the New York and Liverpool United States Mail Steam Ship Company, or Collins Line to Europe. The "Atlantic," the first of the Collins fleet, departed for England in the spring of 1850. According to a contemporary account, her saloons were gorgeous, fitted up and decorated with elegance, taste, and luxury, "without any of that gaudy tinsel which attracts only a vulgar mind." Her carpets were of the

richest description. The panels of her stateroom doors were of satinwood. Her cabin windows, in the stern, were actually stained-glass paintings of the cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Her pier glasses, which were innumerable, stood in elaborately carved rosewood frames. "The ladies," stated the *Herald*, "seemed to be in rapture with these glasses."<sup>4</sup> Her owners were now receiving an annual subsidy of \$385,000 for twenty voyages.

From the first, the speed of the Collins liners distinguished our merchant marine and apparently justified the Congressional appropriation. Within a year after the maiden voyage of the "Atlantic," her sister ship the "Pacific" snatched the Blue Ribbon from the Cunarder "Acadia." Impressed, no doubt, by the "Pacific's" nine-day twenty-one-hour crossing, the Postmaster General, in 1852, raised the yearly subvention to \$858,000, or \$33,000 the trip for twenty-six trips.<sup>5</sup> Alas, in September 1854, the Collins steamship "Arctic" sank in a collision off Cape Race. Three hundred twenty-two perished, including Collins' wife and children. Evidently unmoved by the disaster, Cornelius Vanderbilt calculated that he might embarrass the bereaved operator. He proposed a biweekly service to Europe, alternating with Collins, for only \$15,000 the voyage. "You cannot possibly do it," the worried owner of the "Arctic" contested. "Why, I'm not making any money on my steamers as all the world knows." "I'm patriotic in the matter," the Commodore retorted. "If an Englishman can do it for \$16,000, I'm sure I can, and I won't admit a Britisher can beat us in anything." "That is not business," Collins reasoned. "I can't make it pay as it is." "Then," Vanderbilt concluded, "you've got into a busi-



ness you don't understand. Let me have the opportunity, and I'll make it pay." <sup>6</sup>

Congress, preferring to deal with the established Collins line, declined to aid the Commodore to the extent of \$15,000 the round trip.

Now, in the winter of 1855, Vanderbilt proposed to carry the mails for \$19,250 the voyage in ships twenty-four hours swifter than Collins'. Again, the United States Government discouraged the steamboat king. President Pierce, however, vetoed the \$858,000 subsidy to his rival. Only by an amendment to the appropriations bill did E. K. Collins secure his full subvention, a grant which could be reduced to the original amount on six months' notice.<sup>7</sup> Meantime, some suspected that the Commodore had corrupted the Chief Executive. That accusation, the millionaire denied. "I am mortified as a citizen," he smarted, "that such a charge of bribery should have been made against the President of this Republic. I feel aggrieved that the charge of having offered him a bribe should have been preferred against myself." The capitalist was now posing as the foe of monopoly. "I venture to assert," he claimed, "that it were far better . . . that every steamship now afloat should be sunk in the ocean than that it should be permitted by our system of commercial policy that private enterprise may be driven from any one of the legitimate channels of commerce by means of bounties from the National Treasury. . . . The share of prosperity which has fallen to my lot is the direct result of unfettered trade and unrestrained competition."<sup>8</sup>

Undaunted and unsubsidized, Vanderbilt regained control of the "North Star" and placed her and the 2,000-ton steamer

“Ariel” on the Southampton-Havre run during the pleasant months of 1855. In November, he was complaining bitterly to Senators: “The experience of six months has satisfied me that it is utterly impossible for a private individual to stand in competition with a line drawing nearly one million dollars per annum from the National Treasury, without serious sacrifice. The extravagance which a compensation so munificent naturally engenders is utterly inconsistent with the exercise of that economy and prudence essential to the successful management of any private enterprise, and I have become satisfied that no private individual can be expected to enter alone into competition with a line drawing such material aid from the general government.” Yet he entertained a most ambitious project. “I am now constructing, with my own unaided resources, upon a plan which I am enabled from large experience to assert to be the best adapted to ocean navigation, a steamship of upwards of five thousand tons, and which will cost between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000. I propose to place her in my Atlantic line. . . . I ask for no government loan, or advance to aid me in its construction.”<sup>9</sup>

“I have no apprehensions for the Pacific’s safety,” E. K. Collins, in February 1856, was writing the anxious relative of a passenger. “Think she has met with an accident to her machinery, and has been obliged to put back to Liverpool, in which case you might not hear from her for a month yet. Do not think she is in the ice, or has been—as our steamers have frequently been in and come out without sustaining any serious damage.”<sup>10</sup> Although the “Pacific,” which sailed from Liverpool in January with 45 passengers and a crew of 121, was never heard from again, the Commodore, preoccupied



in Central America, did not compete strenuously with his stricken rival. The "North Star," in 1856, crossed only twice to Bremen. But in July, he anchored his splendid new liner the "Vanderbilt" off Greenleaf's Point near Washington, and invited the Senate and the House to visit "the largest vessel which has ever floated on the Atlantic Ocean." "He thinks," conceded Seward, who had long advocated the Collins subsidy, "that this specimen of naval architecture is worthy of an examination, and will gratify the pride of the American people."<sup>11</sup> In August, the Commodore proposed to carry the U. S. mails to Europe at \$16,680 the round trip. Congress refused his offer, but slashed his competitor's subvention, at the end of six months, to the earlier rate per voyage.<sup>12</sup>

"All around me are wrecks of schemes and hopes." Thus Seward contemplated the fate of Collins, who had lost both a superb liner and Congressional sympathy. "Collins' steamers have been ruined by Vanderbilt's rivalry, and Vanderbilt himself is even worse off."<sup>13</sup> The Commodore may have been more prosperous than the Senator suspected, for in 1857 he maintained two separate routes to Europe. From April until December, the "Ariel" and the "North Star" connected New York with Bremen. From May until November, the "Vanderbilt" joined New York and Havre. That costly new steamer, on her eastbound sailing of August 1, deprived the Cunarder "Persia" of the Blue Ribbon of the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup> The *Vanderbilt Daily News* of the S.S. "Vanderbilt" dilated:<sup>15</sup> "The first man who projected and commenced a line of European steamers unaided by partners, companies or government subsidies—the first individual, monarch or private person—who, at his own expense, built, finished and furnished



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a steam-ship yacht, and with it visited the four quarters of the globe—the man who, unaided by everything except his own enterprise and the patronage of the public, first launched and kept running across the Atlantic a steamer of 5,500 tons—the steam-ship owner who sent from New York to England the steamer that made the quickest passage on record—the one who first demonstrated that beam engines are safe, efficient and reliable for ocean service; and the individual who, in the face of powerful competition, first transported first-class passengers in a first-class steamer, replete with every comfort, from America to England for \$100 each—the man who did all this was Cornelius Vanderbilt. So popular has been the *Vanderbilt* steamer, that the steam-ships of other lines that have left port at the same time—while the *Vanderbilt* has been nearly or quite full—have generally left with very few passengers or, at the most, been scarcely half-filled. For the best ships, best accommodations, fastest passages and lowest fares, the public have been indebted to the enterprising opposer of monopolies, the largest steam-ship owner in the world, one who commenced his career by commanding a small schooner, and who is known wherever commerce spreads a sail as Commodore Vanderbilt!” The *Vanderbilt Daily News* of the S.S. “Vanderbilt” neglected to mention that while the Cunard and Collins liners maintained regular service to Europe, Vanderbilt steamships never crossed the ocean in the horrid winter months.

Deprived of a subsidy sufficient to withstand the Commodore’s rate slashing, the Collins line collapsed. Brown, Harriman & Company, mortgagees of the “Adriatic,” the “Baltic,” and the “Atlantic,” foreclosed on the 1st of April,

1858.<sup>16</sup> In June, the Southern representatives in Congress, weary of upholding the economic interests of the North, questioned the wisdom of subsidizing a merchant marine. Senator Robert Toombs of Georgia declared: <sup>17</sup> "I would as soon have my letters carried in British as in American bottoms, and I would prefer that they should carry them if they did it cheaper. You will never make the country rich by plundering its citizens for the benefit of E. K. Collins or other particular contractors." Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi asserted: <sup>18</sup> "I see no reason why, if we can get our mails carried in British vessels across the Atlantic, we should establish a line of American vessels, merely that we may compete with them in a race across the Atlantic." In that year the triumphant, unsubsidized "Vanderbilt" touched five times at Southampton and Havre. From April to December, the "North Star," the "Ariel," and the "Northern Light" joined New York with Southampton and Bremen. Once again, the "Vanderbilt" outdistanced the Cunarder "Persia." On June 19, she arrived off Sandy Hook just nine days and twenty hours after leaving Cowes.<sup>19</sup>

In 1859, the Commodore consolidated his transatlantic steamships into Vanderbilt's New York, Southampton and Havre Line. The "Vanderbilt," the "Ariel," and the "Ocean Queen" served the channel ports from April to December. Once more, the "Vanderbilt" lowered her own record. She reached Manhattan on May 21 after a voyage of only nine days, nine hours, and twenty-six minutes. Inasmuch as the liner sailed from the Needles, rather than Liverpool, the newspapers reduced her time to nine days, three hours, and twenty-six minutes—thirteen hours and seven minutes faster



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than the fastest Cunarder.<sup>20</sup> In 1860, from March to November, the "Vanderbilt" and the "Illinois" connected New York with Southampton and Havre. The Commodore was now carrying the United States mails, not in exchange for a subsidy, but in return for the inland and ocean postage on letters.

The captains who served the steamboat king dealt knowingly with labor problems. In July 1858, as the majestic steamship "Vanderbilt" headed out to sea, her crew mutinied for higher wages. The adroit master of the crack liner reversed her engines at once, sent the rebellious men ashore, and returned to the dock, where he assembled within an hour other, willing seamen. This fresh crew was described as *cosmopolitan*.<sup>21</sup>

The Commodore, meanwhile, was mingling with the fast men on the road. The capitalist owned to a shameless passion for fine trotters, a taste which he held in common with the opulent publisher Robert Bonner. *What fine looking man is that with a segar in his mouth who is passing all those roadsters on the right? He dashes past everybody but Bonner. His bays must be well-trained. He handles the ribbons as though he was used to it. That gentleman with a white cravat on, you mean? Yes, sir. That is Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt. He . . . drives a pair of horses capable of going down among the thirties for which he paid, we are told, the snug little sum of \$8,000.*<sup>22</sup>

At dusk, Manhattan was splendid with horseflesh. *By four o'clock, it would seem as if all New York had suddenly become owner of fast horses, and were all out on Bloomingdale on a grand trotting spree. This rushing to and fro of ship commodores, book and newspaper publishers, bankers, build-*



*ers, merchants, gamblers and fast men generally, continues until the sun in its daily course has gone to visit the antipodes. By this time, the extra steam is worked off, the rich and fast men all return home, thoroughly ventilated and in good condition for a comfortable supper and a sound sleep.*<sup>23</sup>

The Commodore was one of four hundred business men, members of the Elm Park Pleasure Association, who raced in Elm Park above Ninetieth Street. Other solid men, who did not fancy swift trotters, maintained rich equipages. August Belmont, the fashionable agent of the Rothschilds, invested \$8,000 in an English brack, the only carriage of the kind in the country. James Gordon Bennett of the *Herald* turned out a victoria built in Paris which neither concealed nor crushed the attire of his ladies. "In the matter of expense," one observer rightfully determined, "we are fast approaching the European standard."<sup>24</sup>

What if A. T. Stewart, in the winter of 1860, discharged fifty clerks in consequence of the decline in Southern trade?<sup>25</sup> The omen canceled none of the brilliant entertainments of the season. In the fall, the substantial men of the city got up a glorious ball in honor of the visiting Prince of Wales. With August Belmont, William Backhouse Astor, Moses Taylor, William Aspinwall, Peter Cooper, and other millionaires, the Commodore sat on the Committee of Arrangements.<sup>26</sup>

## I X

The *Herald* was soon to record another, novel ostentation: "For some time after the disaster, the Knickerbockers had the Central Park all to themselves, and rolled along the drives, envied and admired by the pedestrians, or chatted away the interludes of Dodsworth's Concert in sarcastic remarks upon the absent snobocracy. Suddenly, however, there came a rush of blooded horses, a flash of new carriages, and a crowd of new people. They pushed in among the Knickerbocker clique, scraped carriage wheels and tried to scrape acquaintance. Nobody knew who they were, and everybody wondered and inquired. They did not seem to know much of each other, and talked familiarly with policemen. At Ullman's Benefits, they were distinguished for the immensity of their toilets, the largeness of their gloves, the loudness of their voices, their insane efforts to look through the wrong end of their new opera glasses, and their peculiarity of frequently and rapturously applauding at the wrong times and with the most frantic and distressing perseverance. At last the inquiry: *Who are these new people?* was answered. The mystery was explained. They were the government contractors and their families who have made such heaps of money, since last spring, by operations in shoddy, that they could afford to be great people." <sup>1</sup>

Although Commodore Vanderbilt did not deal directly in

shoddy, he did not interfere with subordinates who swindled the United States Government and jeopardized the lives of Union soldiers. The millionaire, late in 1862, was asked to co-operate in outfitting General Nathaniel P. Banks' expedition to occupy New Orleans. "The Secretary of War telegraphed me to see if I could not come to Washington," the capitalist later swore before a Congressional committee.<sup>2</sup> "I went to Washington. The first time I saw him, he intimated something about a quartermaster's position in New York. But I said to him: *We'll stop right there, Mr. Stanton, there is no position in the government that I want, and none that I will take, no place of emolument that I can take.* He was delicate on that point, and stopped it right there. This was before I saw General Banks. Says I: *Anything I can do for you, I am willing to do.* Upon that, we left. This was late in the evening. It was late when I got there. Says he: *I will come and see you in the morning.* Says I: *You need not come. I will come and see you. What time do you get up?* He said: *About nine o'clock.* Well, about that time I went up to the War Department. Said he: *I have thought the matter over and made up my mind. Come and get into the carriage.* We went out and got into the carriage. We went to see General Banks and he and General Banks talked a minute or two, and called me up. Said he: *This is a secret expedition and no one else is to know it but us three.* Says I: *No one will ever know it from me, I will assure you that.* Says he: *I want you to assist General Banks in New York in fitting out.* I said I would do that to the best of my ability. After stating where the expedition was going, we parted. His interviews were short. There was not much to do. We parted with an understanding that Gen-



eral Banks was to leave by the afternoon train to New York. I was going on that train, and so we came on the same train. At this interview with the Secretary of War, he said: *I will have inspectors appointed to inspect the vessels of this expedition.* I said: *That is no use, Mr. Stanton. It don't appear to be any use at all. Why?* says he. I said: *Congress has already passed a law that every vessel that clears from a custom house must have her inspector's papers. There are two inspectors, one for machinery, and the other for the seaworthiness of the vessel, fitness for voyage etc., or else she cannot clear any custom house. Is not that inspection enough for the expedition?"*

The Commodore selected the shipbroker T. J. Southard of the firm of Southard, Wright and Hussey to attend to the details of chartering. "This Mr. Southard was one of the smartest men I met for this thing," Vanderbilt afterward assured an investigating committee.<sup>3</sup> "When I commenced to talk to him upon this subject, I said to him: *Mr. Southard, I want you to understand that I feel a strong interest in this controversy we have got into, and I feel it to be a duty to my country to do it all the service I can. I am going to do it voluntarily without any pay. How do you feel on that?* He stood a little while and I said to him: *Think it well over; we ought to find patriotism enough in our country to do something for it without everybody making money out of the funds of the government.* He said: *I will give my time to the government without any pay; there will be no commission or anything of the kind charged."* That promise, strange to relate, did not prevent Southard, Wright and Hussey from transacting most of the brokerage for the expedition, at rates unfavorable to

the government, and on a commission basis! The firm might have chartered the "Eastern Queen" for as little as \$500 a day, but preferred to lease the vessel for \$900 a day the first month, \$800 a day thereafter. The brokers negotiated for at least seven other ships on just as pleasant terms. Southard's son, despite his father's pledge, exacted a 5-per-cent fee from patient shipowners.

Commodore Van Brunt of the Navy and the engineer Charles H. Haswell were passing on the vessels Southard, Wright and Hussey chartered, but both ignored the destination of the expedition and took no particular pains to choose ships capable of the voyage to New Orleans. In accordance with Vanderbilt's wishes, no special inspector approved their selection.

At length, on the 4th of December, 1862, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mayor Opdyke, and other friends of General Banks boarded a cutter and went down the harbor to toast the sailing of two fleets, one from New York, the other from Hampton Roads. The Commodore, it is related, delivered a rousing speech in which he expressed his confidence that the government would crush the infamous rebellion.<sup>4</sup> The "North Star," flagship of the New York flotilla, reached New Orleans safely. Other chartered ships encountered difficulties. The five companies of volunteers aboard the S.S. "Niagara" compelled their officers to put in at Philadelphia before twenty-four hours had passed. Smooth seas, licking away fresh paint, revealed that the timbers of the vessel were rotten! The "Niagara," built in 1845 for service on inland waters, had long been considered unfit to carry passengers. Vanderbilt, warned by C. H. Haswell of the decay of her hull, passed on

her charter nonetheless. The usually intelligent millionaire relied on the statement of her owner that she was first quality. Alas! Congress did not spare the feelings of the guileless steamboat king. Public opinion called for an immediate investigation of the leasing of that and other unsatisfactory transports.<sup>5</sup>

“Do you regard the ‘Niagara’ as seaworthy, and if so, for what waters?” the Senate committee inquired of the veteran steamboat captain W. S. Havens.

“When Commodore Vanderbilt asked me that question, whether she was seaworthy and fit for the sea, for he knew I had commanded her, I told him no, neither that nor any other sidewheel boat I ever saw—for a voyage across the ocean. The Commodore nodded and said that that was so. I calculated that no sidewheel steamer was fit to go to sea like this at this season. She may go close to shore, but not when heavily loaded as the ‘Niagara’ was.”

“Do you think,” the Senators continued, “that the ‘Niagara’ was a safe boat for navigation this side of the Chesapeake Capes?”

“Yes, sir. I wanted to go in her, and offered to go in her.”

“Would she be fit for going beyond Cape Hatteras?”

“Yes, sir, but not when overloaded. She was not fit for it when she went out.”

“Why?”

“Because she was too deeply loaded. She was loaded in the first place too deep—deeper than she ought to be without a man aboard her.”

Legislators were protesting that the Commodore dispatched the ships without navigators. “Whose business was it to as-



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certain," the committee inquired of Vanderbilt, "whether the men who navigated those vessels were qualified to discharge their duties?"

"The owners of the vessels," the magnate replied.

"Neither yourself nor Commodore Van Brunt made any inquiries on that subject?"

"No, sir. We did not insure the vessels. They managed their own affairs in their own way. They navigated their vessels at their own risk. If they did not do that according to law, they would forfeit their insurance. I think that is the surest way to make them do their duty."

Senator James Grimes of Iowa found such reasoning offensive. Indicting Vanderbilt for recommending uninspected ships at exorbitant prices, the Senator labeled the outfitting of the Banks Expedition ". . . a chapter of fraud from beginning to end." Why, indeed, should the Commodore, who knew the destination of the voyage, choose steamers like the "Niagara," obviously unfit for deep-water navigation? "Now, what was this 'Niagara'?" Grimes fumed. "Why, Mr. President, she was an old boat that had been built for the trade on Lake Ontario nearly a score of years ago. She had been brought around and some repairs put on her, and some four hundred fifty men and officers of the 50th Massachusetts Regiment were forced to go upon her in New York, destined for New Orleans. In perfectly smooth seas, the planks were ripped out of her and exhibited to the gaze of indignant soldiers on board, showing that her timbers were rotten. The committee have in their Committee Room a large sample of one of the beams of the vessel to show it has not the slightest capacity to hold a nail." <sup>6</sup>

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Yet there were those who sympathized with the plight of the millionaire. "I think that for various reasons the Senate should not pass a vote of censure on Cornelius Vanderbilt," Senator Hale of New Hampshire defended the Commodore's role in these dark dealings. "He has been highly patriotic during this whole War, and very liberal in his transactions with the government, and has performed the service gratuitously. While I think that he did not render to the government all that care and fidelity which he should in undertaking this service, I am willing to pass him by and let him go." 7

"I do not believe, sir," the alert Grimes interrupted, "that the name of Cornelius Vanderbilt should be stricken from this resolution. I am not going to pass upon this measure and upon that gentleman by anything he has or has not done formerly. The question is not whether he has been generous to the government . . . but whether, in connection with this single transaction which is now under consideration, he did his whole duty. I cannot lay my hand upon my heart, and say, as a Senator, that I believe he did, and if we are going to condemn anybody by the passage of a resolution, I am prepared to condemn him with the rest." In the end, however, the capitalist escaped with no reprimand at all. Other legislators, less vigilant than Grimes, approved an amended resolution that ". . . Commodore Van Brunt of the Navy and Charles H. Haswell, an engineer by profession, in the supervising and outfitting of the transport fleet for General Banks' expedition, were guilty of negligence in discharge of the duties assigned them, and that the commissions extorted by Mr. T. J. Southard were in express violation of the agree-



ment made and stipulated by him, and ought at once to be refunded to the government.”<sup>8</sup>

The unchastened Commodore, in the days that followed Appomattox, collaborated with other solid men who proposed to turn the U. S. Treasury into a joint stock company. In May 1865, an anonymous contributor to the New York *Herald* suggested that the capitalists of the country, to avoid paying income and estate taxes, might be willing to assume the National Debt. The unknown correspondent recommended that the total indebtedness, which then amounted to \$3,000,000,000, be divided into 150,000 shares worth \$20,000 each. Surely, our leading citizens could rely on handsome dividends! “We cordially endorse the project,” wrote James Gordon Bennett, “and will take two shares, in other words subscribe \$40,000 to carry it out. We shall make money by the operation, for we now pay from \$35,000 to \$40,000 government taxes yearly. No doubt the Astors would take twenty shares. So might A. T. Stewart, Commodore Vanderbilt and many other millionaires.” Neither A. T. Stewart nor any Astor lent his name to the scheme, but Cornelius Vanderbilt offered, unblushingly, \$500,000. Presumably the plan would have simplified our democratic institutions, yet many men of wealth hung back. Although P. T. Barnum put up \$40,000, Potter Palmer \$40,000, Daniel Drew \$100,000, and Drexel & Company of Philadelphia \$100,000, James Gordon Bennett eventually withdrew his support. At the end of ten days, the subscriptions totaled only one per cent of the necessary capital.<sup>9</sup>

It would of course be unjust to claim that Vanderbilt always maintained a realistic attitude. On one occasion, he and



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A. T. Stewart vied with each other to endow the good work of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, the Red Cross of the Civil War. "I'll give as much as Vanderbilt," the merchant promised. "I'll give as much as Stewart," the steamboat king retorted. In the end, both of the substantial men are said to have contributed \$100,000.<sup>10</sup> And the Commodore, according to the journalist Thurlow Weed, relieved the anxieties of Lincoln at a critical moment of the conflict.<sup>11</sup> The President, confronted with an emergency which required \$15,000, turned instinctively to Weed, the friend of many moneyed men. The editor, we are told, agreed at once to approach his wealthy acquaintances. Lincoln, to speed his efforts, penned this note:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, Washington, Feb. 19, 1863

MR. T. WEED:—

Dear Sir—The matters I spoke to you about are important, and I hope you will not neglect them.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

In response, Vanderbilt and fourteen other millionaires each gave \$1,000.

Beyond donating \$101,000 for such purposes, the Commodore sacrificed his favorite son George to the Union cause. This Vanderbilt, on his graduation from West Point in 1860, secured the rank of Second Lieutenant of Infantry. Until the outbreak of the Rebellion, he served on frontier duty at Fort Dalles, Oregon. Later he was stationed at the garrison at Fort Columbus, New York. From the fall of 1861 to the spring of 1862, George supervised recruiting. Whether he fought at Corinth with General Halleck has not been established. If we

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are to believe an obituary notice in the *Tribune*, George saw action in that advance of the Northern armies. On the other hand, the *Bibliographical Register* of the U. S. Military Academy states that he was on leave of absence during the campaign. In any event, he contracted tuberculosis, and, after traveling to the Riviera in a vain effort to recover his health, died at Nice on the 1st of January, 1864. He was then twenty-five.<sup>12</sup>

Inasmuch as the very election of Lincoln terminated Vanderbilt service to Europe, the war must have curtailed the profits of the Vanderbilt line to Panama. In the spring of 1861, the prominent business men of the city, led by the railroad magnate Samuel Sloan, and by the banker Moses Taylor, were forming a United Defense Committee.<sup>13</sup> At that time, the Commodore was seeking to reconcile his patriotic duty with the sale of his ships. Most fortunately, Jefferson Davis summoned privateers to prey on Northern shipping. On the 14th of May, the capitalist wrote his counsel W. O. Bartlett:<sup>14</sup>

DEAR SIR:

Being informed that you are about making a visit to Washington, I take the liberty of asking the favor of you to lay before the government the enclosed proposition, which I addressed to the Hon. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, under date of the 26th ult. To this proposition, I have received no reply, and I attribute this to the multiplicity of business which has engrossed the attention of the department. You are authorized to renew this proposition with such additions thereto as are hereinafter set forth. I feel a great desire that this government should have the steamer *Vanderbilt*, as she is acknowledged to be as fine a ship as floats the ocean, and in consequence of her great speed and capacity, with a proper armament she would be of more efficient service in keeping our coast clear of

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piratical vessels than any other ship. Therefore, you are authorized to say, in my behalf, that the government can take this ship at a valuation to be determined by the Hon. Robert F. Stockton of New Jersey (the only Ex-Commodore in the Navy) and any two Commodores in the service, to be selected by the government, and if this will not answer, will the government accept her as a present from their humble servant.

The Atlantic and Pacific Steam Ship Company have authorized me, as their President, to offer to the government the following steamers, viz: The *Ocean Queen* of 2502 tons, new and complete in every respect; the *Ariel*, 1300 tons, in fine condition; the new iron steamship *Champion*, built in 1859, 1420 tons, drawing a very light draught of water, say seven feet, light, and twelve feet, laden, carries sufficient coal to run her twenty-five days. Also, the steamer *Daniel Webster*, 1035 tons, drawing a draught of water, say ten feet laden.

The price of either, or all, of said steamers, I am likewise authorized to submit to the decision of the Board of Commodores named above. I am induced to make this communication because I am desirous of protecting the government against speculative attempts to take advantage of its necessities, and also to make it known that there are vessels of a capacity to meet all their requirements, which can be obtained without resorting to those belonging to citizens of the so-called *Confederate States* or to those sailing under a FOREIGN FLAG.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

C. VANDERBILT.

Unhappily, the Secretary of the Navy declined the steamships, either as a gift or upon the government's own valuation. The Washington correspondent of the *Tribune* found no fault with Welles' decision. He remembered that examiners had reported against the ships, and he feared that the children of the steamboat king, on the conclusion of the conflict, might put forth enormous claims for compensation.<sup>15</sup>

No doubt the Secretary's indifference bitterly disappointed



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the Commodore. In August, hypercritical travelers from Panama to New York purchased space in the *Times* to serve an unfriendly purpose. The cabin passengers of the Vanderbilt liner "Champion" whined: "There are a few trifling items which we in kindness submit to you as being unworthy of your generally enlarged views and most liberal, humane intentions toward those under your care and protection. For instance, all the meats set before us at our meals were so tainted as to be positively offensive to the smell, and, of course, unfit as food for any civilized creature. . . . Our eyes were never feasted by the appearance of a clean cloth on the table, nor did we, on the voyage (of ten days) luxuriate upon a clean sheet or pillow case. Not a bathroom on the ship, and a spittoon is not an article of furniture to be found in the establishment. We regret, sir, to mention these little inconveniences as having a tendency toward complaint—yes, even instilling in the minds of passengers a thorough disgust and most perfect contempt toward you, as the controller of the magnificent institution composing this company. In conclusion, our very dear friend, we promise you that we will never burden again your superior steamer *Champion* with our presence on board; and in preference to another such voyage, we would each get a wheel barrow, carry our provisions on it, and thus plod across the plains back to our homes on the Pacific—and there we will teach our children to revere your name as the most successful, most penurious and most heartless millionaire that ever disgraced our country." <sup>16</sup>

On the day the above lines appeared in the *Times*, the Commodore glowed anew with patriotic fervor. He published in the *Tribune* his generous proposal of May 14, and he

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denied the base rumor that he appraised the "Vanderbilt" at twice the valuation of the Navy Department. "I have never fixed any price upon the 'Vanderbilt,'" the capitalist claimed, "nor do I consider myself at liberty to do so. I feel that she would be a great ornament to the Navy; and as our government declines accepting her as a present, her price should be determined by highly respectable, fair and honorable men."<sup>17</sup> The Commodore did succeed in leasing certain of his liners. In October, the "Vanderbilt," the "Ocean Queen," the "Daniel Webster," and the "Ariel" transported the troops of General Thomas West Sherman. Sherman, landing at Beaufort, South Carolina, occupied Port Royal Harbor.<sup>18</sup>

"The 'Merrimac' will change the whole character of the war," Stanton sputtered on the morning of the 9th of March, 1862. "She will lay all the cities of the seaboard under contribution." On the day before, the ironclad steamed into Hampton Roads and destroyed both the sailing frigate "Congress" and the sloop of war "Cumberland." Now, at the very moment the Secretary was alarming his fellow cabinet members, the "Monitor" was engaging, successfully, the Southern threat. Leaking, the "Merrimac" withdrew to Norfolk.

Yet the imaginative Stanton, long after the combat, believed that the Confederate steamer might dash forth and endanger the Federal blockade. Had not the "Monitor" also been disabled? He summoned the Commodore to Washington.<sup>19</sup> "Will you see the President?" the Secretary of War requested. "Certainly," the millionaire granted. "Can you stop this ironclad?" Lincoln asked. "Yes," Vanderbilt reassured the Chief Executive. "At least there are nine chances



out of ten that I can. I will take my ship, the 'Vanderbilt,' cover her machinery, and with five hundred bales of cotton, raise the steam and rush her with overwhelming strength on the ironclad, and sink her before she can escape or cripple us." "How much money will you demand for such a service," asked the President, prepared to accept the capitalist's terms. "I won't do it for money," the magnate protested. "I do not want the people of this country to look upon me as one who would trade upon her necessities and make blood money out of her wounds." Lincoln, unwilling to believe in the Commodore's liberality, suspected him for a moment of sympathy for the Confederacy. "What's the use of further talking? You won't do anything for us, I see." But Vanderbilt interrupted: "I don't know about that, Mr. President. I place myself and all my resources at your disposition without pay, and I believe I can protect the fleet and prevent the 'Merrimac' from passing Old Point Comfort. I have a ship which I give you for this purpose. You will place a crew on it, and I will take charge of it. Only let me be free from the control of your Navy Department, and I'll answer for it that the 'Merrimac' won't pass Old Point Comfort." To that proposition, the Chief Executive agreed.

At Hampton Roads, the officer in charge of operations graciously inquired: "How can we help you?" "Only by keeping severely out of the way when I am hunting the critter," the Commodore muttered.

Alas, Cornelius Vanderbilt, on board the S.S. "Vanderbilt," never won a naval battle. The Confederate ironclad, when repaired from her encounter with the "Monitor," declined to sally forth.



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Gideon Welles, who realized that the "Monitor," rather than the "Vanderbilt," overcame the "Merrimac," was not disposed to believe that the Commodore was either glorious or necessary.<sup>20</sup> The Secretary of the Navy, who entertained unkind thoughts about the Secretary of War, intrusted to his diary that Stanton, on the morning of the 9th of March, ". . . was the most frightened man I ever saw. He telegraphed Northern governors and mayors of the principal cities his alarm, imparted his fears to Mr. Lincoln, and all who saw and listened to him, created a panic, was vexed at my coolness. But all this was on the day *after* the 'Merrimac' had come down and sunk the 'Cumberland' and the 'Congress.' . . . The bluster and management of Stanton," Welles concluded, "made the panic seriously ridiculous."

In that December, the "Alabama" captured the "Ariel" en route for Panama. Captain Semmes of the Southern raider, upon confiscating all arms and ammunition found on board, permitted Captain Jones of the Vanderbilt liner to proceed, but only after he signed a bond of \$250,000, payable within thirty days after the independence of the Confederacy was acknowledged by the United States.<sup>21</sup> The Commodore grumbled that Richmond should interrupt his California service, but he was soon fuming at Washington as well. *The Navy Department appropriated the glorious steamship "Vanderbilt."* What if the "Vanderbilt" would prey, henceforth, upon the "Alabama" and other Rebel warships? The capitalist complained that the government had taken advantage of his generosity.

Congress, on the 28th of January, 1864, passed this resolution of thanks: <sup>22</sup>

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Whereas, Cornelius Vanderbilt of New York did, during the Spring of 1862, make a free gift to his emperilled country of his new and staunch steamship "Vanderbilt" of five thousand tons burthen, built by him with the greatest care, at a cost of eight hundred thousand dollars, which steamship has ever since been actively employed in the service of the republic against the rebel devastations of her commerce; and whereas, the said Cornelius Vanderbilt has in no manner sought any requittal of this magnificent gift, nor any official recognition thereof.

Therefore, resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the thanks of Congress be presented to Cornelius Vanderbilt for his unique manifestation of a fervid patriotism.

And be it further resolved that the President of the United States be requested to cause a gold medal to be struck, which shall fitly embody an attestation of the nation's gratitude for the gift, a copy of it being made and deposited for preservation in the Library of Congress.

"Congress be damned," sniffed the Commodore when a clerk from the Department of State handed him the resolutions, mounted in a handsome frame and elegantly embossed. "I never gave that ship to Congress. When the Government was in great straits for a suitable vessel of war, I offered to give the ship, if they did not care to buy it; however, Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Welles think it was a gift, and I suppose I shall have to let her go."<sup>23</sup>

Yet the millionaire acknowledged the medal in expensive sentences.<sup>24</sup> "I shall proudly preserve the splendid token of appreciation which you have transmitted to me," Vanderbilt wrote Seward, "and it is my hope that those who come after me as they read the inscriptions of the medal, and are reminded of the event in their father's life which caused it to be struck, will inflexibly resolve that should our government

again be imperilled, no pecuniary sacrifice is too large to make in its behalf, and no inducement sufficiently great to attempt to profit by its necessities." Before "donating" the "Vanderbilt," the Commodore had earned \$303,589.10 from leasing her to the administration.<sup>25</sup>

Long after the Civil War the steamboat king railed, bitterly: "I was served meanly on that, meaner than ever any government served a man before or since. Why, they never gave me my vessel back."<sup>26</sup> \*

## X

In the autumn of 1862, McClellan engaged Lee at Antietam, and a sudden splendor, that of the dealers in shoddy, illuminated Northern resorts. *At Saratoga and at Long Branch, the rush this year is tremendous, and the excitement at fever heat. New equipages, with new horses, driven by new coachmen in new liveries, flash gaudily along the drives. New silks rustle gorgeously through the halls, and new and superabundant diamonds sparkle brilliantly in the gaslight. The most varied and elaborate, though not the most tasteful toilets vie with each other to attract the attention and compel admiration. The tables are surrounded with new faces, and new healths are drunk in New Jersey champagne.*<sup>1</sup>

\* In 1873, Sutton and Company of San Francisco removed the boilers from the steamer and rigged her as a ship. The "Vanderbilt," after enduring long service as a coal hulk at Gibraltar, was sold for \$2,250 salvage in 1930.<sup>27</sup>



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Cornelius Vanderbilt selected this extravagant hour to diversify his holdings. As Pope, and then Burnside, succeeded McClellan in command of the Union armies, the Commodore increased his commitment in the shares of the New York and Harlem Railroad. The millionaire was undoubtedly meditating on this speculation when he received, at 10 Washington Place, the young exquisite Ward McAllister.<sup>2</sup> Muttering, "My boy, my boy," the capitalist showed the fop his stables, his parlors, and his statuary. "Commodore," McAllister interrupted his host, "you will be as great a railroad king as you were once an ocean king, and as you call me your boy, why don't you make my fortune?" "Mac," Vanderbilt slapped his guest roundly on the back, "sell everything you have and put it in Harlem stock; it is now twenty-four; you will make more money than you will know how to take care of." The Commodore had accumulated no less than \$40,000,000 from his steamboat ventures.<sup>3</sup> Inspired, he turned toward his own likeness by Powers. "Mac, look at that bust. What do you think Powers said of that head?" "What did he say?" "He said: *It is a finer head than Webster's.*"

The broker Henry Clews graciously reminded young men in his memoirs that <sup>4</sup> ". . . but few gain sufficient experience in Wall Street to command success until they reach that period of life in which they have one foot in the grave. When this time comes, those old veterans of the Street usually spend long intervals of repose at their comfortable homes, and in times of panic, which recur sometimes oftener than once a year, those old fellows will be seen . . . hobbling down on their canes to their brokers' offices. . . . I say to young speculators therefore: watch the ominous visits to the

Street of these old men. They are as certain to be seen on the eve of panic as spiders creeping stealthily and noiselessly from their cobwebs just before rain. If you only wait to see them purchase, then put up a fair margin for yourselves, keep out of the *bucket shops* as well as the *sample rooms*, and only visit Delmonico's for a light lunch in business hours, you can hardly fail to realize handsome profits on your ventures." Such was the climate of the New York Stock Exchange at the moment Cornelius Vanderbilt determined to risk a significant percentage of his capital in railroads rather than in steamship lines.

Feigning carelessness, the Commodore declared: "I've got a few millions lying idle, and Harlem is going up to par, if we give it time. If I don't get the benefit of it, my children will."<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, it has been told that the millionaire, with no previous experience in rails, plunged into Harlem at the age of sixty-eight. In reality, Vanderbilt had been studying railway securities for many years. As long ago as 1849, he had held stock in the Central Railroad of New Jersey.<sup>6</sup> On the eve of his departure for Europe on the "North Star," he purchased his first shares of Harlem.<sup>7</sup> On his return, he was ready to place \$25,000 in a coal-hauling road which Horace Greeley projected.<sup>8</sup> Later, in 1855, he acquired an interest in the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western.<sup>9</sup> Although the Commodore was, of course, well versed in the ways of the Street, he gained a deeper understanding of finance upon the bankruptcy, in 1854, of Robert L. Schuyler, President and Transfer Agent of the New Haven. Vanderbilt was so unfortunate as to lend Schuyler a considerable sum of money secured by 2,210 shares of New Haven stock.<sup>10</sup> Once insolvent, the Pres-



ident and Transfer Agent confessed that he had been issuing any number of shares, including those the Commodore held as collateral, with no authorization from the company. Possibly William Henry proved that a railway was capable of attractive returns. In 1857 he pleaded, successfully, for permission to manage his father's holdings in the Staten Island Railroad. As receiver, and then President, W. H. Vanderbilt resurrected the line. At the end of five years, Staten Island Common was selling at \$175.<sup>11</sup> This example may have decided the Commodore to dominate, rather than participate in, New York and Harlem. Other financiers, glancing at the past of the property, had no confidence in the future of the road. Chartered in 1831, Harlem in the next twenty-nine years paid no more than 13 per cent all told in dividends. At that, Vanderbilt, who was buying the common at as low as \$9 the share, may have smiled. What if Harlem, upon leaving Manhattan, wandered through Westchester up to Chatham instead of touching the important Hudson River towns? The original franchise of the line, which permitted the laying down of single or double trackage from any point north of Twenty-third Street to any point on the Harlem River between Third and Eighth Avenues, with a branch to the Hudson between 124th and 129th Streets, provided a strategic entrance into New York City.

In the winter of 1863, P. T. Barnum celebrated at Grace Church the wedding of General Tom Thumb and Miss Lavinia Warren, and the substantial men of the city turned from the anxieties of the Rebellion to lavish rich gifts upon the midgets. August Belmont forwarded a set of charms to the General's bride; Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt presented Mrs.



Thumb with a coral and gold-set brooch, ear-rings, and studs of the finest workmanship.<sup>12</sup> Now, on the 6th of March, the Commodore joined other millionaires at a Monster Mass Meeting for the Union at Cooper Institute. In the presence of A. T. Stewart, Samuel Sloan, William Backhouse Astor, and others of the affluent, David Dudley Field declaimed: "War is a great calamity but not the greatest. Turpitude is a greater calamity; dishonor, still greater."<sup>13</sup> The while, Harlem shares were registering a satisfactory appreciation. On the 8th of April, the Common touched 48. Fifteen days afterward, the equity opened at 59, reached 72½ on the second board, and closed at 70½. In the afternoon, Mayor Opdyke signed an ordinance of the Common Council allowing the railroad to lay tracks up Broadway and other downtown streets. The Mayor, it is interesting to note, disregarded the fact that the Legislators at Albany, on the day before, had conferred this very franchise not on Harlem, but on the Consolidated Stage Company of George Law and other speculators. Opdyke reminded advisers that the bill at Albany made no provision at all for revenue to the city, while the Vanderbilt railway promised 10 per cent of the gross receipts of all travel below Union Square.

On the 23rd, William Backhouse Astor, Samuel J. Tilden, Pierre Lorillard, Moses Taylor, and other moneyed men protested to Governor Seymour that George Law's proposal violated "all principles of justice."<sup>14</sup> Meantime, the directors of Harlem, hurriedly ordering two hundred men to tear up the streets, left the city for a long weekend. Immediately, rowdies in the hire of Law's Consolidated Stage Company began demolishing the pavement of Whitehall Street. Evi-

dently, Harlem's enemy was intent on obtaining adverse possession of the right of way. The two gangs of laborers might have met, and desperate street fighting might have occurred, had not Law, early in the evening, relied on an injunction to halt the workmen in the employ of Vanderbilt.<sup>15</sup>

Not unnaturally, Harlem Common trembled the next morning on the New York Stock Exchange. Would the Governor veto the Broadway Franchise of the Legislature? Would New York City, all injunctions to the contrary, again decree the extension of the Harlem tracks? As those and other rumors perplexed the Street, Daniel Drew, the Commodore's fellow director in the road, could scarcely contain his delight. He would sell Harlem short: that is, sell shares which he did not own, but would have to purchase in order to make delivery. Certain that he could demoralize quotations in the stock before covering his sales, the former drover turned his thoughts to the charming, if hypothetical, margin of profit. While anticipating those gains, Drew was of course careful to disclose nothing to his immediate associates on the Harlem Board. He may even have applauded, with other directors, the 12 point advance in the common which saluted Cornelius Vanderbilt's election to the Presidency on the 19th of May.

Drew was now retiring in his residence on Bleecker Street much later than was his wont. He found fewer hours, and those after midnight, in which to thumb his Bible and meditate upon Religion. New acquaintances, the Board of Councilmen of the City of New York, occupied the hours he once gave to God. The pious manipulator plotted with these gentlemen the ruin of the Commodore. The Governor had recently vetoed the Law Franchise of the Legislature. Nothing now



restrained the Board of Councilmen from allowing Harlem to extend tracks up Broadway. Nothing, Drew made clear, but the interest of the Councilmen themselves. Cannily the former drover revealed his plan only to those politicians of whom he was sure. He encouraged his confederates to propagate elaborate rumors that Harlem would enjoy the Broadway Franchise. The avaricious officeholders, short of the stock, were ready to repeal the grant and realize small fortunes.

While Wall Street believed that the Councilmen were working in the interest of Commodore Vanderbilt, suddenly, on the 25th of June, the Board rescinded the Broadway grant.<sup>16</sup>

The result of the decree was at first satisfactory, for Harlem, which had recently soared, on rumors, to 110, collapsed to 72. Yet the Councilmen and their adviser encountered, as they began to cover their shorts, an unexpected difficulty: *They had sold more Harlem short than they could purchase.* To their horror, the equity rose 25 points on the following day. "It may be safely stated," *The New York Times* observed, "that the entire capital has been sold on the Street and on the Exchange in two days."<sup>17</sup> The schemers bid for the security in vain. What Harlem certificates the Commodore did not possess himself lay in the strongboxes of his brokers. Berating the desperate politicians and their leader, the *Times* commented dryly:<sup>18</sup> "A corner of the most formidable proportions is impending. The chief owners of the Harlem property are Mr. CORNELIUS VANDERBILT and his immediate friends, and that portion of the capital stock which they have not already paid for and transferred to their names, they have the cash means in the bank to pay for, whenever the short-



sellers—who have contracted for more than the entire capital—are ready to make deliveries. The public sympathies are wholly with Mr. VANDERBILT in this transaction, and there is the most hearty congratulations exchanged on the Street today that the shameless trick and fraud of the City Councils and their stock-jobbing conspirators have been paid off with compound interest. The lesson, it is to be hoped, will not be thrown away.” The Commodore relentlessly withheld all of his Harlem until, late in August, the Common touched 180. At that point, he permitted the wretched Councilmen and their guide to complete their short sales.

*He that sells what isn't his'n,  
Must buy it back, or go to prison.<sup>19</sup>*

ran a jingle which the disconsolate Daniel Drew repeated. He and the Common Council are reported to have lost many millions of dollars in this unhappy operation.

When Meade, on the 4th of July, 1863, reported the victory at Gettysburg, Cornelius Vanderbilt was winning yet another triumph on the New York Stock Exchange. The capitalist had placed certain of his funds in the Hudson River Railroad, a line which enjoyed a superlative right of way from New York to Albany along the east bank of the river. Under the astute management of Samuel Sloan, the property was paying pleasant dividends. Having made what appeared to be a wise commitment, the Commodore, according to the observant broker Henry Clews,<sup>20</sup> . . . *was sunning himself on a pile of logs on the Jersey side of the Hudson, attempting to lay aside for a time the toil and trouble of eking out a precarious existence in speculation. While basking in the*

*noon-day sun and gazing with delight on the luxurious foliage that arose from the New Jersey bank of the river, he was aroused from his charming reverie by a messenger from Wall Street who conveyed to him the important intelligence that a wicked and unregenerate clique of bears had conspired to sell Hudson short, and that it was declining with great rapidity under the repeated and unmerciful blows of their hammers.*

Vanderbilt, Clews relates, *arose and shook off his lethargy, as a lion may be supposed to shake the dew from his mane prior to his preparation for a spring upon an unfortunate foe.* He netted, in this new corner, something over \$3,400,000.

During these transactions, the Commodore tested the intelligence of William Henry by recommending that he sell Hudson at 110. The younger Vanderbilt, however, dealt as shrewdly in shares as in manure. While pretending to dispose of his holdings, he secretly increased his commitment. At length, the stock having reached 137, his father inquired how much he had lost. "110 on 10,000 shares," W. H. Vanderbilt estimated. "That ought to make me \$270,000." "Very bad luck. Very bad luck this time," the older capitalist commiserated. "But then I bought and so made," his son interrupted. "Eh?" snapped the Commodore. "Oh," William Henry smiled, "I heard that was your line, and so concluded you went long instead of short." "Ahem!" The older Vanderbilt acknowledged the cunning of his heir.<sup>21</sup> The Commodore was now ready to concede that William Henry might have chosen a capable wife. "Sam," the cornerer of Harlem and Hudson River once said, summoning Samuel Sloan. "I want you to see two fine boys." He pointed to the two oldest

sons of W. H. Vanderbilt. "Where did they get their ability? From me and a damn fine mother!"<sup>22</sup>

The family of Cornelius Vanderbilt was careful to celebrate the profits from his deals in railway shares. On December 19, 1863, the Commodore and Sophia, married fifty years, invited 150 guests to 10 Washington Place. Two sons, nine daughters, eight sons-in-law, two daughters-in-law, thirty-two grandchildren, one brother, three sisters, and enough nieces and nephews joined the millionaire's commercial acquaintances to attend this Golden Wedding.<sup>23</sup> George Vanderbilt was then on the Riviera, but he remembered his parents with a costly *porte-monnaie*.

The change purse was naturally not the only magnificent memento. Cornelius Jeremiah's gift to his mother was an exquisite bracelet; William Henry's present to his father, a handsome dressing case. The Commodore, who received hundreds of gold canes and riding whips from business admirers, rewarded Sophia with a tiny golden steamboat, twenty inches overall, complete with musical clockworks. That homage did not suffice, for a tree of growing ivy and exotic plants dominated the parlor. The names of the children, cleverly inscribed in flowers, fluttered at each opening of the doors.

"Brothers and sisters," said Cornelius Jeremiah, addressing the group, "clustered as we are once more around the paternal hearth, let the spectacle presented tonight inspire us with a firm resolve that while we may not hope to live so long nor near so usefully as our parents have already lived, we shall at least so act henceforth as to leave no stain upon



the spotless names, no tear to the eyes of those we have so many reasons to revere and bless.”

“Life is both sweet and bitter,” the capitalist’s son-in-law N. B. LaBau believed. “You have three sons and nine daughters; and insensible must be that man to the influence of beauty who will not admit that the daughters of Vanderbilt are not only fair, but that they are among the fairest of America. May the affections of your children cling to and around you as their names cling to that tree. May their love be ever green, and as enduring as the love of Ruth for Naomi, which shall live through eternity itself.”

William H. Vanderbilt delivered a most sober discourse. Happily, the younger grandchildren concluded his remarks by singing:

Dear Grandpa, our thoughts are constant to thee,  
And true as steel to the star.  
Dear Grandma, we see thee, we joy at the sight,  
And bid thee be happy, this night.  
Here, our love we’ll bring,  
Here, our melody sing.  
Our grandparents and their fiftieth wedding night,  
We hail with a thrill of delight.

Another grandchild, Henry Allen, was less expansive. “Grandfather,” he began, “be assured that we are not forgetful of the hospitalities you have always extended to us. The habits of an active business life have naturally disinclined you for participation in social pleasures, but I think no one will contradict the assertion that we have uniformly experienced from you gentle treatment.”

Now N. B. LaBau was chanting:

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Staten Island's a nice little island,  
It's covered with beauty all o'er.  
It's the prettiest spot in creation.  
It's healthy—and *wealthy*—that's more.  
It's healthy—and *wealthy*—that's more.

And an envoy of the Samuel Smith Infirmary, Staten Island, was humming:

Will you help us? God help you to decide  
To make the Samuel Smith Infirmary your *Island* Bride.

This last refrain, it would seem, reminded Vanderbilt of his retiring hour. At twelve o'clock sharp, the Seventh Regiment Band tactfully played "Home, Sweet Home" outside the windows of 10 Washington Place.

It is pleasant to record the prosperity of the solid men of the nation in this, the year of Vicksburg. To the Collector of Internal Revenue, A. T. Stewart reported \$1,843,631; William Backhouse Astor, \$838,525; Moses Taylor, \$473,494; William E. Dodge, \$385,018; Potter Palmer, \$333,485. The Commodore owned to \$680,728. These figures stood for the net *taxable* revenues, not the gross incomes of the millionaires. Under the exceedingly mild income tax of the Civil War individuals paid no assessment on dividends from railroad shares. Accordingly, the Cornerer of Harlem and Hudson River may well have earned far more than Stewart.<sup>24</sup> Now, at midnight, *in quiet black, with his usual snow-white waist, unpretending and gentlemanly as he is everywhere*—so ran the account in the *Tribune*—the railway king bade his guests farewell.<sup>25</sup>

The distinguished physician Sir Henry Holland was break-

fasting with Thurlow Weed. "There is," the English visitor turned to his host, "one of your merchant princes of whom I have heard a good deal—Mr. A. T. Stewart—whom I should like to see." "There is," the journalist proposed, "another friend of mine I should be glad to have you meet first." Weed, with Holland, called on Vanderbilt. "I should like, if you will permit me," Sir Henry addressed the Commodore, "to see your bureaux of affairs." "What bureaux?" inquired the capitalist. "Your departments of business," the Englishman advised, "where you conduct your affairs." "There." Vanderbilt indicated a boy on a stool. "The rest is here," Weed smiled, and he pointed to the Commodore's head. "But come," he continued, "pull out your business drawer for Sir Henry. Show him your materials for work." The drawer contained nothing but a checkbook and several cigars. Weed and Holland then made their way to the emporium of Stewart. "I see," the physician remarked on taking leave of the merchant, "that he is a close, keen man of business; that he directs everything. But your Commodore is a genius." Weed spoke of Vanderbilt's taste for trotters. "I divined as much," Holland concluded, "from the freshness and ease with which he transacts his affairs." <sup>26</sup>

With his usual freshness and ease, the Commodore, early in 1864, traveled to Albany in the hope of convincing the Legislature of the wisdom of a bill authorizing the Harlem, at long last, to lay tracks up Broadway. In the belief that he had accomplished his purpose, the magnate returned to New York. Unluckily, the devious Drew, anxious to repair his losses in the first Harlem corner, followed the railway king to the capital. There the pious manipulator persuaded the



very legislators who had pocketed his rival's money that they might reap far greater profits by selling Harlem short. The politicians, apparently unmindful of the fate of the Common Councilmen, agreed to circulate the rumor that the line would obtain the privilege, and then, on Drew's signal, report adversely on the project. Vanderbilt, from all accounts, suspected nothing while the Common rose, gradually, on the New York Stock Exchange. On the 16th of March, the stock was selling at \$149 the share. But the state senate committee refused to approve the Broadway grant, and the issue, in ten days' time, declined 48 points.

The Commodore, gravely disappointed that Albany had not returned his kindness, called on John M. Tobin, one of his trusted brokers.<sup>27</sup> "How do you feel about it?" the millionaire asked his aide. "Shall we let 'em bleed us? John, don't those fellows need a dressing down? Let us," Vanderbilt decided, "teach 'em never to go back on their word again as long as they draw breath. Let us try the Harlem corner once more!" Joined by another speculator, Leonard Jerome, the two operators organized a \$5,000,000 pool. Within a few weeks, the Commodore and his allies purchased 27,000 more shares of Harlem than existed. By April 6th, the stock stood at 150. And on the 17th of May, the *Herald* disclosed that ". . . for Harlem as high as 280 has been paid, and 300 is confidently expected by its managers who can make any price they please."

"Put it up to a thousand," Vanderbilt chuckled to Tobin. "This panel game is being tried too often." But Leonard Jerome prevailed upon the cornerer to abandon so splendid a revenge. "If you should carry out your threat," he insisted, "it

would break every house on the Street." In the end, the Commodore agonized the faithless officeholders and the former drover at \$285 the share. "We busted the whole Legislature," the capitalist bragged, "and scores of the honorable members had to go home without paying their board bills." In this ill-advised transaction, Daniel Drew alone is said to have dropped \$1,000,000. Russell Sage was then beginning his career on Wall Street. Long afterward, Sage said of Vanderbilt: "He was to finance what Shakespeare was to poetry, and Michelangelo to art."<sup>28</sup>

In June, John M. Tobin attained the Presidency of the Hudson River Railroad. "Commodore," Samuel Sloan admitted as he surrendered the office to the cornerer's appointee, "you and I cannot each boss one job and work together."<sup>29</sup> Confident now of the future of railway securities, the President of Harlem disposed of his Panama steamers for \$3,000,000—\$1,000,000 down, \$2,000,000 in eighteen months.<sup>30</sup> In this, the year in which Grant assumed the supreme command of the Union armies, greenbacks sold at as low as 39 cents. Our leading citizens, however, reported happy incomes. Although A. T. Stewart confessed to only \$316,127, William Backhouse Astor acknowledged \$1,300,000, Moses Taylor \$567,295, and Cyrus Hall McCormick \$191,399. Cornelius Vanderbilt accounted for \$576,551.<sup>31</sup>

Evidently, the Civil War ended without damaging the taxable revenues of many of our solid men. If Moses Taylor, in 1865, realized only \$339,912 from banking, Horace B. Claflin earned \$1,300,000 from dry goods, and William Backhouse Astor gained \$1,153,459 from real estate. The Commodore won \$623,360.<sup>32</sup> In June, he supplanted Tobin,

who may have been unduly independent, as President of the Hudson River. In December, with all the confidence which became the proprietor of two railway systems, Vanderbilt interviewed an aspiring lawyer. "Railroads are the career for a young man," the magnate swore to Chauncey M. Depew. "There is nothing in politics. Don't be a damn fool!" Depew had just been nominated U. S. Minister to Japan, but he decided, in the beginning of 1866, to serve as attorney for the New York and Harlem.<sup>33</sup> This servant of the railway king, whose oratory was ever dulcet to the ears of moneyed men, achieved with unfailing ease the political ends of his apolitical master. "Chauncey Depew?" snuffed Roscoe Conkling. "Oh, you mean the man that Vanderbilt sends to Albany every winter to say *haw* and *gee* to his cattle up there." "The Commodore," said an old neighbor many years later, "made no personal advances to corrupt or conciliate legislatures, beyond giving the members transportation. Someone else did most of that species of work without acquainting Mr. Vanderbilt necessarily of the matter. I do not mean a regular lobbyist was employed to do corrupt work, but there was what might be called a political manager of the road, who was the Albany representative of it."<sup>34</sup>

The Commodore was now desperately eager to recompense General Grant for his services to the nation. In July, the late Commander of the Northern Armies rode from New York to Albany (via Chatham) on a private train of the Harlem Railroad. The national flag decorated the locomotive, the "W. H. Vanderbilt." The portrait of George Washington replaced the reflector of the engine lamp. In the passenger car, in the haze of the Hero's cigars, reclined Colonel Badeau,



Colonel Porter, General Batcheler, two newspapermen, and William Henry Vanderbilt.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Vanderbilts did not move in polite circles, the Commodore, that summer at Saratoga, sat on the Committee of Arrangements for a reception in honor of the General. Later, in November, William Henry Vanderbilt in company with Henry Clews, August Belmont, Horace Greeley, and others of our first citizens, got up a \$15,000 *levée* for Grant at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. On the next morning, the *Herald* reported that the entertainment was *gorgeous and fashionable to the extreme*. The Idol of the Nation, led in by William Backhouse Astor, shook hands with A. T. Stewart, whose taxable income for the year reached \$4,071,256.<sup>36</sup> *Costly carpets yielded softly to the feet of the promenaders while gorgeous furniture and appropriate decorations, exquisitely arranged, pleased the eye and gratified the taste. A thousand gaslights flashed back their brilliancy from costly jewels. Soft orbs, sparkling with excitement, spoke conclusively to the heart of many a susceptible youth. Perfumes and odors filled the atmosphere. . . .*<sup>37</sup>

Cornelius Jeremiah Vanderbilt could not share in this magnificence. On the 29th of December, the hapless epileptic, at Litchfield, Connecticut, was penning these lines to his fortunate brother:<sup>38</sup> "As I now write, I have the good fortune to commemorate the anniversary of my thirty-fifth birthday, and I am determined that it shall prove the happy and sure inauguration of the most eventful and glorious era in my entire history. The truth is, William, that when you saw me in New York, you beheld a discouraged and abandoned and well-nigh Godforsaken wreck. I had then reached

the culmination of everything censurable and unmanly, and, as I stated to you, had become eternally disgusted with every species of dishonorable dealing. My mind from that hour was made up as to the future; and, believe me, that my coming record shall be as fair and honorable as your own. Two or three years will work out the meaning and sincerity of my determination, and in the meanwhile, patience and perseverance shall continue the leading stimulus of my ambition. I have selected this quiet little town in which to remain until I can with safety and honor move in a more social and extended sphere."

## XI

Our solid men were ever dainty feeders. Now, as the nation recovered from the Civil War, they attended, it would appear, an infinite number of banquets. In 1865, the legendary caterer Lorenzo Delmonico reported only \$72,617 to the Collector of Internal Revenue. In 1866, he accounted for \$206,504. Our millionaires could easily afford to cultivate the palate. In the first year of the peace, William Backhouse Astor's taxable income totaled \$1,112,045; Cornelius Vanderbilt's, \$653,892.<sup>1</sup> Under such reassuring circumstances, the Commodore was not disposed to vary his investment policy. He read, no doubt with interest, the pamphlet which Adolph Sutro submitted to the moneyed men of New York, but he declined to sign a letter in behalf of the engineer's project to dig a tunnel through the Comstock Lode.<sup>2</sup> At this

time, the railway king was contemplating the beauties of a third system, the New York Central. The Central, the consolidation in 1853 of nine little railroads linking Albany and Buffalo, was the inevitable extension of the Harlem and Hudson River roads.

As early as 1863, the Commodore sought, unsuccessfully, to enter the Board of Directors of the New York Central.<sup>3</sup> On acquiring the Hudson River Railroad, he redoubled his efforts. The Central, during nine months of the year, dispatched freight from Albany to New York via the People's Line of Hudson River steamers in preference to the Vanderbilt cars. Only when ice choked the river did the Central rely on rail connections with Manhattan. Daniel Drew, the Proprietor of People's Line, must have smiled at this predicament of the Great Cornerer. At length, in the hope of altering the outlook of the Central, the Commodore seated his son-in-law H. F. Clark as a director. The Board did agree to bestow an annual bonus of \$100,000 on the Hudson River Railroad, did agree to ship via the Hudson River Railroad in the pleasant months, and did agree to grant the Hudson River Railroad a pro-rata share of long-distance hauling charges. The bonus, however, alarmed the major stockholders. The American Express Company held 46,000 shares; Legrand Lockwood, 46,000 shares; Henry Keep, 35,000 shares. Cornelius Vanderbilt owned only 25,000 shares.<sup>4</sup> An election, on the 12th of December, 1866, removed the friends of Hudson, revoked the agreement, and installed Henry Keep as President.<sup>5</sup>

At this impertinence, the Commodore bided his time until, in midwinter, he was absolutely necessary. On the 17th of



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

January, 1867, the capitalist ordained the absolute isolation of the New York Central from New York City. He would halt his trains at East Albany, across the river from the terminus the Hudson River shared with the unfriendly road. The New York newspapers of the 15th of January published these two cards: <sup>6</sup>

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, HUDSON RIVER R. R. CO.  
NEW YORK, JAN. 14, 1867

The Hudson River Railroad Company gives notice that the arrangements heretofore existing between this company and the New York Central Railroad Company having been terminated by the Directors of the New York Central Railroad Company, this company will, after Thurs. the 17th of Jan. inst., only sell tickets and check baggage over their own road and will only recognize tickets sold at their own offices and by their own agents. Passengers will after that date be ticketed and the baggage checked to and from Greenbush or East Albany, the terminus of the road. The same rule will be observed as to freight.

C. VANDERBILT, President.

By the above notice, passengers will observe that the ERIE RAILWAY is the only route by which they can reach NEW YORK from Buffalo and without CHANGE of coaches or RECHECKING of baggage.

To the New York Central Railroad Company,  
GENTS:

Enclosed you will receive copies of resolutions this day passed by the Board of Directors of the Hudson River Railroad Company and of the Harlem Railroad Company.

You will notice that after Thursday, the 17th inst., the Hudson River Railroad Company and the New York and Harlem Railroad will only recognize tickets sold at their offices and by their own agents; nor will baggage be checked on either of the said roads except to and from Greenbush or East Albany, the terminus of the road, and will also take notice that the Hudson River Railroad and

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

New York and Harlem Railroad Companies will only receive and deliver freight at the depot at Greenbush or East Albany and will transport the same at local rates.

Respectfully yours,

WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT,  
Vice President.

Although public opinion compelled the State Legislature to appoint a committee to probe the dispute, the New York Central capitulated in forty-eight hours. This card appeared in all newspapers: <sup>7</sup>

President's Office,  
Hudson River Railroad Company,  
New York, Jan. 19, 1867.

THE HUDSON RIVER RAILROAD COMPANY give notice that the arrangements heretofore existing between this company and the New York Central Railroad Company having been recognized by the New York Central Railroad Company, arrangements satisfactory to both companies for the transaction of their passengers and their freight business have been made.

Passengers will be ticketed and baggage checked on and after 20th inst.

The same will be observed as to freight.

C. VANDERBILT, President.

In Albany, the investigation proceeded.<sup>8</sup> Augustus Schell, the Commodore's legal adviser, insisted that the Hudson River Railroad, according to charter, was not intended to cross the river. "As a lawyer, do you say that the Hudson River Railroad stops at Greenbush and not at Albany?" a legislator inquired. "I say, as a lawyer," Schell replied, "that the act provides that the rails shall be laid to Greenbush, and that is as far as they can be laid."

"The position of the Hudson River Road is this," William

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Henry Vanderbilt explained. "She has an equipment of eighty-two engines with cars and material enough to do all business to two thousand tons a day, if she can get it. The New York Central Railroad asks the Hudson River Railroad to maintain that equipment to do their business for ninety days in a year, and to leave it standing during the remaining nine months of the year when the navigation is open.

"I told Mr. Keep," the younger Vanderbilt continued, "that the Hudson River wanted nothing in the world but what was fair and right. He replied: *Your father said that the other day, but I have made up my mind that he does not know what is right and what is wrong.* I did not get offended at that remark," William Henry asserted.

"Does Cornelius Vanderbilt own a majority of the stock in either of the roads?" quizzed an investigator.

"It is very hard for me to say whether he does or not of the Harlem Railroad, but he does not of the Hudson River Railroad. He may possibly own one half of the Harlem Railroad."

"What proportion does he own of the stock of the Hudson River Railroad?"

"I think it is about seventeen thousand shares."

"How many shares are there of the stock of the Hudson River Railroad?"

"There are sixty-nine thousand shares."

"He owns a controlling interest?"

"Yes, if seventeen thousand shares is a controlling interest in sixty-nine thousand shares. . . . I have twenty-one hundred shares."



## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

“How much stock do you have in the Harlem road?” an examiner questioned the Commodore.

“I don’t know,” the older Vanderbilt declared, “whether it is right for the committee to inquire into how much property I’ve got.”

“It is material to know whether you have a controlling interest.”

“I have a good deal.”

“Have you a controlling interest?”

“I don’t know whether I have a controlling interest. We have a Board of Directors, and in that Board of Directors the majority rules.”

“How much stock do you have in the Harlem Railroad?”

“That I cannot tell you.”

“Can’t you tell how much you’ve got?”

“I don’t know that that is a proper question. You might just as well ask me to give you an inventory of my estate. If I am compelled to answer, I will answer.”

“Do you refuse to answer?”

“If I am compelled to answer, I will.”

“I want to know whether you refuse to answer that question.”

“I prefer not to answer it, because I don’t think it proper.”

“I think you had better make your calculation not to go home tonight until we see what the Legislature has to say about your refusal.”

Fortunately, William Henry intervened to remind the Committeeman that he, William Henry, had already testified that the Commodore owned half Harlem.

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

“What was the object of getting the Hudson and Harlem roads under one control?” an investigator asked of Cornelius Vanderbilt.

“When I got into Harlem, I owned nothing in the Hudson. I tried to bring the Harlem up, but found continual clashing with the Hudson. I then got into the latter, and the result is that the interests of the two roads are now harmonized.”

A legislator wondered why the Commodore had not chosen to sue the Central. “That is not according to my mode of doing things. It is not according to my mode of doing things to bring a suit against a man that I have the power in my own hands to punish.”

“Were you not aware that in punishing a railroad corporation, you had no right to punish the people of the state or inconvenience them?”

“I did not desire to punish anybody. All I desired was our own rights.”

“Did you not know that the law provides a remedy for all wrongs?”

“The law, as I view it, goes too slow for me when I have the remedy in my own hands.”

“You knew at that time that it would be a public inconvenience?”

“I supposed so, of course. I had no fault to find with the public. I have always been a public serving man. I have always served the public to the best of my ability. Why? Because, like every other man, it is my interest to do so, and to put them to as little inconvenience as possible. I don't think there is a man in the world who would go further to serve the public than I would.

“Mr. Keep said to me,” Vanderbilt recalled, “*We can live without the Hudson River Railroad. We do not want the Hudson River Railroad.* I said to him: *Mr. Keep, I do not care one rush who is elected President of the New York Central Road; there is one thing I do know—there is no party of men who can manage its affairs more prejudicially to our interests than the last Board of Directors.* I had a son-in-law in there,” the Commodore fleered at the very Board which passed the bonus, “and I had other men whom I considered my friends, and they compelled me to submit to things which I would not have submitted to, and yet they undertake to say that I had control of the Central road. I never wanted it and never would take it.”

“You did have some personal friends on the Board of Directors?”

“My personal friends, when they take such grounds as they do, I am afraid of.” The capitalist had coveted a far greater subsidy than \$100,000. “I am not afraid of my enemies, but my God, you must look out when you get among your friends.”

“You had a legal remedy.”

“A legal remedy upon such matters I don’t think much of.”

An alert investigator asked why Vanderbilt, at the last minute, refused to negotiate the dispute. “I did not have the time. I went home.” The millionaire paused, intolerably fine. “Life is not a bit too short for me, and I like to play whist. I will not permit any business to come in and interfere with that.”



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

“Could not the Hudson River Railroad enforce their claims through the courts?”

“They might. I will not give an opinion on that point. I stated a while ago that I for one will not go to a court of law when I have got the power in my own hands to see myself right. Let the other parties go to law, but by God, I think I know what the Law is; I have had enough of it.

“I am not a railroad man,” the Commodore concluded. “I own a great deal of railroad stock. I invested my money in railroads because I supposed it was going to be a good investment. I intended to let it lie there. All I have to say is that if the acts of legislature are going to lessen the value of my investment, I shall sell out my interest in railroad stocks and invest in something else.”

Inasmuch as no legislation damaged the quotations for his holdings, Vanderbilt, in the following months, probably increased his stake in the New York Central. In November, the New York newspapers published these two letters: <sup>9</sup>

New York,  
November 12, 1867.

C. Vanderbilt, Esquire,  
DEAR SIR:

The undersigned, stockholders of the New York Central Railroad Company, are satisfied that a change of administration of the company and a thorough reformation in the management of its affairs would result in larger dividends to the stockholders, and greatly promote the interests of the public. They, therefore, request that you will receive their proxies for the coming election and select such a Board of Directors as shall seem to you to be entitled to their confidence.

C O M M O D O R E V A N D E R B I L T

They hope that such an organisation will be effected as shall secure to the company the aid of your great and acknowledged abilities.

Yours respectfully,

EDWARD CUNARD

JOHN J. ASTOR, JR.\*

BENKARD AND HUTTON

JOHN STEWARD

*and others, representing over  
thirteen millions of stock.*

New York,  
Nov. 13, 1867

Messrs. Edward Cunard, John J. Astor, Jr.,  
Benkard and Hutton, John Steward,  
and others representing over \$13,000,000 in stock:

GENTLEMEN:

Your letter is received. I will accept the proxies of such of the stockholders of the New York Central Railroad Company as shall see fit to transmit them to me, and I will vote upon them *as I shall vote upon my own stock.*

Yours respectfully,

I am,

C. VANDERBILT.

On the 11th of December, the Commodore gained the Presidency of the New York Central and chose his own directors.<sup>10</sup>



“The health of the President of the United States!” Vanderbilt raised his glass at dinner shortly after Andrew Johnson vetoed the Freedman’s Bureau Bill. “Some say his recent speech is vulgar; I say it is just.”<sup>11</sup> Evidently, in company with Henry Clews and other personalities of Wall Street, the

\* John Jacob Astor III.

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Commodore was at first inclined to favor the policies of Lincoln's successor. On the 29th of August, 1866, Cornelius and W. H. Vanderbilt, W. B. Astor, A. T. Stewart, and many more substantial men dined the Chief Executive at Delmonico's.<sup>12</sup> Yet Johnson, in his anxiety to escape contamination, had spurned Daniel Drew's gift of a coach and span of horses.<sup>13</sup> Later, while haranguing a crowd at Albany, he would lose his temper. Thereupon Clews would remark: "My business friends and I were heartily sorry that we had anything to do with this unruly Executive."<sup>14</sup> Meantime the amenable Grant supped with Stewart, and lingered, cigar in hand, in the stables of the older Vanderbilt.<sup>15</sup> At length, on the 4th of December, 1867, our capitalists, gathered at Cooper Institute, proposed the General for the Presidential nomination. On this opulent occasion, A. T. Stewart presided; Daniel Drew, William Backhouse Astor, and Cornelius Vanderbilt served as vice presidents.<sup>16</sup>

The Commodore, although bitterly opposed, as a matter of principle, to any form of charity, displayed a surprising magnanimity toward the South. Early in 1867, the magnate collaborated with Hamilton Fish, August Belmont, and Peter Cooper in organizing the Southern Relief Association to care for the destitute of the Confederacy.<sup>17</sup> In May, the millionaire empowered H. F. Clark and Augustus Schell to furnish bail for the release of Jefferson Davis.<sup>18</sup> In money matters, it must be remembered, Vanderbilt was seldom lofty. "Commodore, glad to see your face on them bonds," said a bondholder of the New York Central, complimenting the railway king on his portrait engraved on each certificate. "It's worth ten per cent. It gives everybody confidence." At that, the



Great Cornerer smiled grimly. “ ’Cause,” the bondholder explained, “when we see that fine, noble brow, it reminds us that you’ll never let anybody else steal anything.”<sup>19</sup>

Having withdrawn from the Panama steamships, the Commodore in 1867 earned only \$46,853 for tax purposes. To be sure, had the government assessed dividends on railroad stock, he might have sworn to far more than \$977,452—the taxable revenue of William Backhouse Astor.<sup>20</sup>

## X I I

“We made a drive at them fellows,” the Commodore said, retailing one of his rate wars with the Pennsylvania Railroad. “They kept cutting down and cheating all the time. *My God, I says, when you get down low enough, stay there.* Did you see how they began to hollow?” With equal gusto, Vanderbilt dismissed the Erie Incident. “The reason why I bought Erie was there was a lot of people in the Street that called themselves my friends, came up to me and pressed me very hard to go in with them. It is altogether out of my line. *Damn your pools, I don’t know anything about it, anyhow.* I declined going into the pools. I says: *If you want me to help you, I will.* I had some loose money. *If you want me to help you along with Erie, I will help you along.* And they got me engaged in it, and I bought a pretty large amount of Erie—but on no such idea as ever taking possession of the Erie Road—not the slightest.” So the railway king described the only

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

engagement in which he survived, rather than annihilated, his adversaries.<sup>1</sup>

Bewildered by the wondrous manipulations which Drew worked in Erie shares, brokers on the New York Stock Exchange were wont to chant:

*Daniel says up—Erie goes up.*

*Daniel says down—Erie goes down.*

*Daniel says wiggle-waggle—it bobs both ways.<sup>2</sup>*

As treasurer of the line which reached from Jersey City to Lake Erie, the ever-devious, usually victorious drover inspired legends. Scribblers, commenting on Wall Street, kept the sinister Drew constantly in mind. "Nearly every clubhouse," Matthew Hale Smith wrote of Manhattan in 1868, "indicates the brief life of a New York aristocrat. A lucky speculation, a new turn of the wheel of fortune, lifts up the man who yesterday could not be trusted for his dinner, and gives him a place among the men of wealth. He buys a lot on Fifth Avenue, puts up a palatial residence, sports his gay team in Central Park, carpets his sidewalk, gives two or three parties and disappears from society. His family return to the sphere from which they were taken, and his mansion, with its gorgeous furniture, becomes a club house. These houses are becoming more and more numerous."<sup>3</sup> Strollers on the Avenue, contemplating a new clubhouse, would wonder in what new operation Drew had beggared what gullible investor. Yet, Smith conceded, "Men who have had a taste of the Street cannot be kept from their favorite haunts." And Drew waxed ever richer. In the spring of 1866, the drover completed a truly beautiful operation. Profiting from the

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

chronic financial anxiety of Erie, he lent the railway \$3,500,000 in exchange for 28,000 shares of unissued common stock at \$3,000,000 in convertible bonds. The devout speculator, secretly converting his bonds into 30,000 more shares of stock, then sold Erie short. When called upon to make delivery, Drew unloaded all his hidden store, undermined the market, and realized yet another fortune. "In such an atmosphere," mused Smith, "great crimes must be common." The treasurer has been credited with these words: "I cleaned up \$48 on every share dealt in. It was the finest scoop I ever made. It is true, those 58,000 shares had been intrusted to me only to hold as security until the road should pay back my loan. But in a business deal you can't stop for every little technicality." <sup>4</sup>

This last maneuver, however, wearied certain of the Erie stockholders. As the election of 1867 approached, a group of Boston investors, intent on ousting Drew from the management, called on Cornelius Vanderbilt for assistance. The Commodore, who cannot have entertained kind thoughts of his adversary in the two Harlem corners, swore he would aid the State Street aggregation. But the wily drover learned of these unfriendly plans and begged, in his turn, for Vanderbilt's help. What obscure sympathy for the psalm reader can have agitated the Great Cornerer? The Commodore pledged the Boston shares in his old enemy's interest! On the 8th of October, a certain Underwood attained the position of treasurer; on the 9th, Underwood, a dummy, having resigned, Drew resumed his old post. Ruefully, the *Herald* observed: "It is a long lane that has no turning, and there will come a time when the Erie will be a well-managed road and a much



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

better paying property than it is at present with a flock of financial vultures for directors.”<sup>5</sup>

The gifted Drew soon revealed yet another accomplishment. When the board members formed a pool to manipulate the market quotation of the common, the psalm-loving speculator, as comptroller of the band, lent pool funds to one unfortunate member who persisted in buying Erie while his confederates were depressing the stock. Within a few weeks, the treasurer was able to divide ample profits with his intelligent associates. Nevertheless, the Commodore counted on Drew to remember the turn he had done the Boston crowd. Alas! No sooner did Vanderbilt propose that the Erie, the New York Central, and the Pennsylvania consolidate their earnings, than the drover proved himself an utter ingrate. Several directors noticed that the Erie, while contributing one-half of the fund, would receive only one-third in return. At that delicate stage in the negotiations, Daniel Drew failed to come to the aid of his benefactor. Meantime, the troubling rumor obtained that the Erie might damage the prosperity of the Vanderbilt roads by establishing a direct connection with Chicago over the Michigan Southern tracks.<sup>6</sup>

Undaunted, the railway king moved to subject the devious drover to every legal torment. On the 17th of February, 1868, Frank Work, the Commodore's representative on the Erie board, appeared before Judge Barnard of the Supreme Court of New York to apply for an injunction forbidding the payment of either principal or interest on the \$3,500,000 loan of 1866. Successful in obtaining a temporary order, Work came the next day before the same judge, this time to petition that Drew be removed from office. Latterly, the wily

speculator had leased the worthless Buffalo, Bradford & Pittsburgh Railroad to the Erie in exchange for \$3,000,000 of convertible bonds. Learning that the treasurer had previously acquired the Buffalo, Bradford & Pittsburgh for the sum of \$250,000, Barnard requested that Drew show cause why the prayer of the petitioner should not be granted. Yet Vanderbilt might not rest. "The Street," the *Herald* reported, "is beginning to take sides in the conflict already, and just now the prevailing belief is that the Erie party, as jacks in office, will be ultimately successful, while the bull party opposing them will reap a crop of disasters and come out the small end of the horn in the long run. Hence the Street is afraid to hold Erie, and the clique supporting it has to bear its full weight." Brokers believed that unknown amounts of new common stock, created from convertible bonds, might at any moment demoralize the market.<sup>7</sup>

On the 19th of February, Drew, abetted by two sinister fellow directors, Jay Gould and Jim Fisk, Jr., secured the authorization of \$10,000,000 in convertible bonds supposedly to cover the cost of the construction of a depot, and to defray the expenses incurred in laying a vague length of track. Well aware of the evil intentions of the drover, the Commodore obtained an injunction against the conversion of any bonds whatever. His dealers, somewhat relieved, began buying ever greater blocks of Erie for his account. Yet, as the Great Cornerer made ready to add a fourth railroad system to his holdings, the intimates of the treasurer snickered. "If the printing press don't break down," grunted Fisk, "we'll give the old hog all he wants."<sup>8</sup>

Frequenting as he did ladies of pleasure rather than gen-



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tlemen of the cloth, James Fisk, Jr., provided the ideal foil for Daniel Drew. While the cunning drover bowed his head in prayer at Methodist gatherings, his accomplice would wait upon the wanton beauties of the music hall. Fisk, who gloried in the title of Prince of Erie, courted many fallen women, but lavished his serious attentions upon Miss Josie Mansfield, a disreputable actress whom he set up in the most elegant parlors of the American Club Hotel. In her honor, the voluptuary turned out a superb clarence on Fifth Avenue, insisting on at least four colored men in livery. Although Fisk shared Vanderbilt's taste for fine horses, he gained weight for all that. To excuse his paunch, the corpulent Prince waxed his mustaches in the manner of the reigning French Emperor.

This obese director of Erie, born thirty-three years before in Bennington, Vermont, began his business career by joining a traveling circus. Eventually he progressed to a position in the wholesale department of the Boston emporium of Jordan, Marsh and Company. Subsequently the nascent capitalist failed as an independent dry-goods jobber and as an independent securities dealer. It was as the agent for a New England group seeking to acquire Drew's Bristol steamship line that he made the acquaintance of the treasurer of Erie. Drew, before concluding the sale of the steamers, recognized the special talents of the negotiator. To put them to use, he created the brokerage firm of Fisk, Belden & Company. Doubtless he believed that Fisk's extravagance might blind the public to the iniquities of the Erie Railway. The Prince did place a canary bird in the stall of each of his trotters. Later, on gaining control of the Narragansett Steamship



Line, he furnished on each of the steamers unnumbered canaries in gold cages.

Recalling on one occasion the agonies which the railroads of Jay Gould were wont to suffer, Daniel Drew remarked of his other confederate in Erie: "His touch is death." Yet Gould, in his anxious, frugal childhood in Delaware County, New York, had written an essay entitled: "Honesty Is the Best Policy." "My father was a small farmer and kept a dairy of twenty cows," this director afterward recounted the poverty of his youth.<sup>9</sup> "As I was the boy of the family, I generally brought the cows in the morning and assisted my sisters to milk them at night. I went barefooted and I used to get thistles in my feet, and I did not like farming in that way: so I said one day to my father that I would like to go to a school that was some twelve or fifteen miles from there. He said all right, but that I was too young. I said to him that if he would give me my time I would try my fortune. He said all right, that I was not worth much at home and I might go ahead.

"So next day I started off. I showed myself up at this school and finally I found a blacksmith who consented to board me, as I wrote a pretty good hand, if I would write up his books at night. In that way I worked myself through the school. Then I got into a country store where I made myself useful sweeping it out every morning and learning what I could about the business during the day. My duties in the store occupied me from 6 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. In the meantime I had got quite a taste for mathematics, especially surveying and engineering. I took that up after I left school and as I was pretty busy during

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the day, I used to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and study from that time until 6 o'clock, and I very soon found out that I got a pretty good idea of that branch, so I concluded I would start out as a surveyor.

"I heard of a man in Ulster County who was looking for an assistant in making a map of the county. I wrote to him and he wrote back engaging me. So one spring morning I started off home. This man's bargain with me was \$20 a month and found [food and lodging]. When this man came to start me out, he gave me a small pass book and said: *As you go along you will get trusted for your little bills, what you will eat and so on, and I will come along afterwards and pay the bills.* I thought that was all right. I think it was on my second or third day out that I met a man who took a different view. I had stayed at his house over night. They charged in that part of the country at that time a shilling for supper, sixpence for lodging and a shilling for breakfast, making two shillings sixpence in all. I took out my little book and said: *I will enter that.* The man turned on me with an oath and said, referring to my employer: *Why, you don't know this man. He has failed three times. He owes everybody in the county, and you have got money and I know it and I want the bill paid.* There I was. I hadn't a cent in my pocket. So I just pulled out my pockets and said to him: *You can see that I tell the truth. There are my pockets.* So finally he said he would trust me. *I'll trust you,* said he, *but I won't trust that man.* This incident had such an effect on me that it seemed to me as though the world had come to an end. I debated with myself whether I should give up and go home, or whether I should go ahead. I came to a piece of the woods



where nobody could see me, and I had a good cry. Finally I thought I would try my sister's remedy, a prayer. So I got down and prayed and felt better for it, and I then made up my mind to go ahead. I set my lips close together and made up my mind that I would go ahead and *die in the last ditch.*"

So Gould, in this predicament, designed sundials for farmers at a dollar each. Later he wrote a history of Delaware County which he peddled from door to door. But he won in time the confidence of the capitalist Zadoch Pratt, who established him in the tannery business in a town named after himself: Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania. When Pratt withdrew from the firm, Gould induced a certain Charles M. Leupp to purchase his sponsor's interest. Leupp, it has been reported, investigated the accounts of the firm only to discover that all was not well in Gouldsboro. Whether he unearthed actual evidence of fraud has not been established. In any event, Leupp, in the panic of 1857, shot and killed himself in the parlor of his costly Madison Avenue home.

Jay Gould was already winning a reputation as a desperate manipulator. In 1860, rather than be ousted from the tannery, the once simple farmer boy defended himself by force of arms. Soon he was speculating on Wall Street. Buying control of the well-nigh worthless Rutland and Washington Railroad, the young operator wittily unloaded the property at a handsome profit on the Renssaeler and Saratoga line. Gould gained, as is well known, the darkest renown in the annals of Wall Street. Yet one may wonder whether this speculator really employed more devious methods than his peers. Pursuing his ends with all but inhuman devotion, he inevitably awoke the suspicions of other buccaneers. At the



end of a business day Gould would withdraw from the world, inhale the choice orchids of his observatory, or browse in his well-stocked library. The Stock Exchange, it would seem, could not excuse his preference for solitude.

Now, at the age of thirty-two, already a partner in the brokerage house of Smith, Gould and Martin, he entered the Erie Board of Directors in the interest of Daniel Drew.

“When the Commodore puts on his railroad look, it means something,”<sup>10</sup> whispered those familiar with the wiles of Vanderbilt. But Drew, Fisk and Gould, utterly unafraid of the Great Cornerer, made ready, despite his injunction, to convert their last \$10,000,000 of bonds into common stock. Vice President A. S. Diven of the Erie afterward testified:<sup>11</sup> “On the evening of the 7th of March, Saturday evening, as I was about leaving the office, it may have been 5 o’clock, I should say as late as 5, I was about leaving the office and stepped into the President’s office before leaving, and the President, if I remember right, was then signing, or had just finished signing a book, and he said to me that those transfers of stock were so much on the Street that it kept him signing most of the while; he was unwell, and he wished I would sign some for him. I told him if he would give me the books, I would take them home and sign any quantity he might want; I took them to my house, and I think the Sabbath was broken a little signing some. . . . I should not have signed them had I known [that they were certificates for new stock] because there was an injunction which I should have paid regard to.”

Jim Fisk, equally observant of the legal niceties, *secretly* waylaid a messenger and snatched the stock books.

But the resolute Commodore, relying apparently on the injunction against conversion, now determined to add Erie to the list of his roads. His brokers began buying the equity with fervor on the morning of Monday the 9th of March. Meanwhile Drew, Fisk and Gould were releasing the 100,000 shares just converted from the \$10,000,000 bond issue. Bankers, ever wary of Erie, hesitated to lend Vanderbilt the capital with which to continue the struggle. "We can't lend on Erie!" those gentlemen protested. "What will you lend on?" asked his aide Richard Schell. "Central—that's good," the financiers replied, revealing their own serious commitment in that stock. "Very well," Schell commanded. "If you don't lend the Commodore half a million on Erie at 50, and do it at once, he will put Central at 50 tomorrow and break half the houses on the Street. You know whether you will be among them."<sup>12</sup> The bankers surrendered; the Vanderbilt dealers continued purchasing. On Monday the Commodore bravely bought enough Common to raise the quotation from 80 to 83. But on Tuesday, under an avalanche of fresh certificates, the stock collapsed to 78. The Great Cornerer had not only failed to corner Erie; he had lost over \$7,000,000 to his enemies.

Although it was known on Wall Street that Vanderbilt talked horses and played whist until almost dawn on Wednesday, his sublime pose did not quiet the nerves of the Erie directors. The seventy-four-year-old magnate might at any moment summon the police. Fearful of prison, his adversaries fled to Jersey City beyond the reach of New York law. One doughty conspirator is known to have borne away \$6,000,000 in a hackney coach!

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

The newspapers were quick to term the new offices of Erie in Taylor's Hotel: Fort Taylor. Fifteen picked men of the Jersey City police force under Chief of Police Fowler, and a larger force under Inspector Masterson of the Erie detectives, formed Fisk's militia. After journalists had thoroughly inspected the rifles, the shot, and the shell which defended the fugitives, Fisk explained that ". . . this struggle is in the interest of the poorer classes especially." The plump director proved that the Commodore, by unjust freight rates, annually forbade the entry into New York City of 1,000,000 barrels of flour and 3,000,000 bushels of wheat. "Only those who perform works of darkness shun the light," sermonized Fisk, cultivating the newsmen. "We must never complain of the publication of our public acts through the press."<sup>13</sup>

On the evening of the 16th of March, half a hundred thugs, dazed drunk on gin, crossed on the Pavonia Ferry and approached Fort Taylor. "We want Drew," the rowdies blubbered. Inspector Masterson then armed his troops and notified the invaders that the treasurer was not in residence. Some hinted that the Commodore dispatched the ruffians. Others, with more insight, guessed that Fisk imported the gang to terrify the psalm reader.<sup>14</sup> All three of the confederates were stealthily negotiating, after dark, with Cornelius Vanderbilt. Since they crossed the river furtively and singly, no confederate could be sure of another's dealings.

Gould was not always fortunate in his midnight discussions. When the orchid cultivator entered, on one occasion, the parlors of 10 Washington Place, the Commodore, according to Henry Clews, ". . . conversed freely for some time, but in the midst of his conversation, he seemed to be sud-



denly seized with a fainting spell, and rolled from his seat unto the carpet, where he lay motionless and apparently breathless. Mr. Gould's first impulse was to go to the door and summon aid, but he found it locked and no key in it. This increased his alarm, and he became greatly agitated. He shook the prostrate form of the Commodore, but the latter was limp and motionless. Once there was a heavy sigh and half-suffocated breathing, as if it were the last act of respiration. Immediately afterward the Commodore was still and remained in this condition for nearly half an hour. Doubtless this was one of the most anxious half hours that ever Mr. Gould has experienced. The object of the Commodore's feint was evidently to try the courage and soften the heart of Mr. Gould, who never seemed to suspect that it was a hoax. His presence of mind, however, was equal to the occasion, and he bore the ordeal with fortitude until the practical joker was pleased to assume his normal condition and usual vivacity. If Mr. Gould had been a man of common excitability, he might have acted very foolishly under these trying circumstances, and this doubtless would have pleased his tormentor intensely." <sup>15</sup>

The conspirators, although seeking to reach an agreement with Vanderbilt on the loot, embarrassed him in his efforts to appoint a receiver for Erie. Justice Barnard, the Commodore's favorite, failed to obtain the office when Justice Clark of Albany intervened. Finally, as George Osgood, the millionaire's son-in-law, was nominated only to be enjoined in his turn, Peter B. Sweeny, Boss Tweed's accomplice, assumed the post and \$150,000.

In Albany, the affairs of Erie continued agitated. To the

alarm of Jay Gould, an investigating committee actually favored Vanderbilt. Soon the friends of the orchid cultivator were introducing corrective legislation: legalizing the recently created common stock, authorizing a broad-gauge connection with Chicago, and forever forbidding consolidation with the New York Central. Evidently the adherents of the Commodore were active in their turn. The *Herald* correspondent in the capital reported: "The lobby influences will be of magnificent proportions. Like a greedy man who grows more avaricious with the increase of his gains, the *ring* are apprehensive of losing even the usual percentage to the go-between, and the question is now under discussion whether it will not be better (it will certainly be more profitable) to have no dealings with the lobby, but transact business directly with the principals. A paragraph from the pen of a famous lobbyist, in one of the morning papers here, indicates the extensive character of the lobby influences which are, or will be, at work. It says that Mr. Vanderbilt is reported to be worth about seventy millions of dollars. It is hazarding very little to guess that the chances of success are decidedly with the Vanderbilt party.

"It was said," the Albany correspondent informed his editor a few days later, "that the Drew party were willing to spend \$2,000,000 to secure the success of the measure. There had been almost Lenten fast in the legislature in the matter of *jobs*. The *boys* were poor and hungry after the long abstinence of the session. How beautiful then, the prospect which the Erie contest opened up to them! How they gloated over the pleasures which the fight would develop. It was deemed a fair and legitimate subject for plunder. Two great specula-





*Above:* THE VANDERBILT MAUSOLEUM. *Below:* THE CHÂTEAU OF CORNELIUS VANDERBILT II—1 WEST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET

*(Photos Brown Brothers)*







*(Brown Brothers)*

THE LIBRARY OF W. H. VANDERBILT AT 640 FIFTH AVENUE



tors were seeking to get the advantage each of the other. The money which might be bled from them would be honestly earned, the prize was so great again, that the *boys* were anxious to bag it all, and they had determined to do no business through the lobby, but to go straight to headquarters. Each man was so suspicious of his neighbor that he feared the humiliating trick of being sold out. *Rings* of two or three or more were formed for protection. In fact, the *boys* were divided into rings throughout the house. The *grand ring* was feared particularly, and a caucus at Stanwick Hall was held by the outsiders where an opposition ring was formed for protection against the leaders.”<sup>16</sup> The truly sophisticated of the politicians were soon asking \$4,000 each. Alas! in protest at such prices, the enemies of the Commodore (according to the *Herald*) abandoned the contest. On the 27th of March, the Legislature voted down the Erie bill.

Yet the conspirators had not altogether forsaken their friends in the capital. On the 31st of March, Jay Gould was arrested in Albany on an attachment for contempt issued by Judge Barnard. When required to give bail of \$500,000, he was in no way inconvenienced. Now, on the 20th of April, the legislators passed a law similar to the recently rejected bill. In this the Great Cornerer acquiesced, to the infinite disarray of the ring. The *Herald* told of the lobbyists' panic: “The first known of the cessation of hostilities was about 9 o'clock this morning (the 20th) when Jay Gould received a despatch announcing that the Vanderbilt party had withdrawn all opposition. The rumor was not long in passing from mouth to mouth, and ere 10 o'clock, there was a rush for Parlor 57 at the Delavan House, where the pecunious Gould

had been holding forth. It is said that prices came down wonderfully. Those who had been demanding \$5,000 were now willing to take anything not less than \$100. The great Erie coffers were closed, however. There was no longer any need of votes.”<sup>17</sup> The politicians, exasperated, hurriedly passed a freight ruling unfriendly to the Central. The disconsolate representatives quite forgot that the Erie had been less loyal to New York than the Vanderbilt properties. While at Fort Taylor, the triumvirate had turned their railroad into a New Jersey corporation.

At last, on the 25th of April, Daniel Drew was seen walking in broad daylight past the corner of Wall and William Streets. His careless stroll proved that the confederates were adjusting their difficulties with the State of New York and with Cornelius Vanderbilt. When the conspirators purged themselves of all injunctions before Judge Barnard, that Justice, to the bewilderment of many, pronounced mild judgment. Several of the directors paid fines of \$10. Drew paid nothing.

President Eldridge of the Erie, at a meeting of the Board of Directors on the 2nd of July, explained Barnard's moderation. The repentant schemers agreed to relieve the Commodore of 70,000 shares of common at 70, paying \$2,500,000 in cash and \$1,250,000 in bonds quoted at 80. And in exchange for the right to call on him for his remaining shares at 70, the confederates delivered \$1,000,000 more in cash. The wretched Drew yielded \$540,000 which he had mulcted from the treasury, and resigned his office. Although Gould and Fisk now dominated the railway, the Prince of Erie grumbled at the conditions of the compromise. “You are



bearing in the remains of the corporation to be placed in Vanderbilt's tomb," he groaned to the secretary of the company.

Later Fisk gave this account of the final negotiations with the President of Central: <sup>18</sup> "The Commodore was sitting on the side of the bed with one shoe off and one shoe on. He got up, and I saw him putting on the other shoe. I remember that shoe from its peculiarity: it had four buckles on it. I had never seen shoes with buckles in that manner before, and I thought if these sort of men always wear that sort of shoe, I might want a pair. He said I must take my position as I found it: that there I was, and he would keep his bloodhounds (the lawyers) on our track; that he would be damned if he didn't keep them after us if we didn't take the stock off his hands. I told him that if I had my way I'd be damned if I would take a share of it; that he brought the punishment on himself and he deserved it. This mellowed him down. I told him that he was a robber. He said the suits would never be withdrawn till he was settled with. I said (after settling with him) that it was an almighty robbery; that we had sold ourselves to the devil, and that Gould felt just the same as I did."

The brazen Prince of Erie, on the 5th of December, called on Cornelius Vanderbilt to demand that he repurchase the 50,000 shares at 70 and that he return the \$1,000,000 additional recompense! The Commodore, aware that Erie was selling at 40, rejected the offer. Unhappily, the railway king, unable to contain his indignation, published a highly indiscreet letter in the *Times* in which he declared: "I have had no dealings with the Erie Railway Company, nor have I ever

sold that company any stock or received from them any bonds.”<sup>19</sup>

“Having been absent in Boston a few days,” Fisk replied, “I find on my return an extraordinary card. This card is undoubtedly drawn out by the tender which, on Saturday last, I made to Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt.”<sup>20</sup> The corpulent voluptuary then discussed every detail of the Compromise of July 2, mentioned a memorandum the Commodore signed disposing of the shares, and printed facsimiles of two Erie checks the Commodore cashed totaling \$1,000,000. “Inasmuch as it clearly appears from these documents,” he concluded, “that someone of the name of *C. Vanderbilt* received \$1,000,000 from the Erie Company, and as it does not appear by any record in the company’s office that Mr. Vanderbilt gave the company any consideration for that sum except the discontinuance of suits over which he says he has no control, it would seem that some further explanation is needed to relieve Mr. Vanderbilt from the imputation of an enormous fraud upon the stockholders of the Erie Railway Company. Will he be kind enough to inform the public whether it is true, as currently reported, that he forthwith sold all his stock, thus breaking down the price to a low point, and entailing another severe loss upon the company? I am not disposed to countenance a newspaper controversy, but if others are so foolish as to do it, the side I represent is strong enough in truth and proof to meet its enemies, either in the courts or in the papers, and let the consequences rest on those who began the war.”

Although the menace of another Erie conflict weighed on Wall Street, the Commodore decided, in this very moment,



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on one of the brilliant coups of his career: an 80 per cent stock dividend on New York Central. In the last year, he had added \$3,500,000 in water to the Hudson River; now he would pour \$23,036,000 into Central. "This is a pretty large scheme," agreed the lesser railroad capitalist Chester W. Chapin, "but I doubt if you can combine to pay eight per cent on the increased capital." "How much," Vanderbilt inquired, "can we pay?" "Perhaps six per cent." "Well," the Commodore observed, "that is enough for any investor who obtains his capital as easily as this."<sup>21</sup>

On Monday, the 21st of December, 1868, the New York Central announced:

Whereas this company has hitherto expended of its earnings for the purpose of equipping and constructing its road and in the purchase of real estate and other properties, with a view to the increase of traffic, moneys equal to eighty per cent of the capital stock of the company, and whereas the several stockholders of the company are entitled to evidence of such expenditure, and to reimbursement of the same at some convenient future period, now therefore

Resolved, that a certificate signed by the President and Treasurer of this company, be issued to the stockholders severally, declaring that such amount of the capital stock held by him, payable ratably with the other certificates under this resolution, at the option of the company, out of its future earnings, with dividends thereon at the same rates and times as dividends shall be paid on the capital stock of the company, convertible into stock of the company, whenever the company shall be authorized to increase its capital stock to an amount sufficient for such conversion.

Resolved, that such certificates be delivered to the stockholders of this company at the Union Trust Company in the city of New York, on the presentation of the several certificates of stock, and that the certificate provided for in these resolutions shall be endorsed on the stock certificate.

Resolved, that a dividend of four per cent, free of government tax,



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is hereby declared payable on the 20th day of February next and also upon the interest certificates of this company this day authorized.

The interest certificates authorized by such resolutions will be issued to the several stockholders entitled thereto, at the office of the Union Trust Company, in the City of New York, where the same will be ready for delivery on the presentation of the stock certificates.

Cornelius Vanderbilt has been frequently and bitterly reviled for his stock-watering. "What is," scoffed the broker Rufus Hatch, "the effect upon the poor workman of having constantly before his eyes examples of enormous wealth, not gotten by saving and patient industry, but by mere trick—by what is really a shameless robbery of the public? Will not universal demoralization be the result?"<sup>22</sup> And Charles Francis Adams II, the basic historian of the Erie Wars, exposed that "\$50,000 of absolute water has been poured out for each mile of road between New York and Buffalo. It is probably safe to say," Adams concluded, "that the Vanderbilt stockwaterings between Buffalo and New York annually cost the American people not less than \$3,000,000 in excess of all remuneration which ever under any construction of it belonged to the owners of the lines."<sup>23</sup> Yet it should be kept in mind that the Commodore, in diluting the stock of his roads, was basing his decision on earnings. His properties, under his astute, economical management, were well able to pay dividends on the increased capital.

Central, which had closed on Saturday at 134, soared on Monday to 165. Elated by the quotation, Vanderbilt entered into a provisory entente with Gould and Fisk! The Commodore desired not only the legalization of the stock divi-

dend, but also the approval of the Legislature to consolidate the Central with Hudson River. His recent opponents, aiming at eternally dominating the Erie Board, coveted a classification act, under which only one-fifth of the directors would be elected in any one year. Accordingly, the three operators, no doubt in order to save political expenses, combined their efforts in Albany. Boss Tweed, then a State Senator, cannot have been indolent in their behalf, for he was now a director of Erie.

At length the State of New York, on the 20th of May, 1869, authorized the Central scrip. Vanderbilt, regaining his freedom, prepared for a glorious rate war. The Commodore reduced the \$160 tariff on a carload of cattle from Buffalo to New York to only \$40. When Gould and Fisk charged a penny a head, the Great Cornerer lowered the rate to \$1 a carload, and anticipated the ruin of the Erie. Gould and Fisk then secretly purchased 6,000 head of cattle, shipping every steer to New York via the New York Central.<sup>24</sup> "From now on," Vanderbilt admitted, "I'll leave them blowers alone."<sup>25</sup>

Gould, who gambled on the misery of railroads rather than on their prosperity, did not hesitate to testify of Erie stock: "There is no intrinsic value to it, probably; it has a speculative value; people buy it and sell it, and sometimes they get a little too much of it." Said the orchid cultivator, of the law permitting convertible bonds: "I think it is a good law. I have never known it to be abused; if that was repealed, I think Mr. Vanderbilt would have the road, but as long as it is not repealed, it is held *in terrorem* over him."<sup>26</sup>

The Commodore might benefit the public, indirectly. "My idea of a railroad is this," he declared in answer to the suit



of a shareholder who disapproved of the Central stock dividend.<sup>27</sup> "If I am to take possession of a railroad today, I send my men all over it to examine it in every particular and all over. They report to me its condition, and then I see that it is kept up, equal in every respect to what it is then, for the next year's report, in respect to the rolling stock and everything else. If I increase it beyond that, that is a subject which may be credited to the road—to the stockholders, if you please. I mean that if we take hold of a road and investigate it, and find that it has so much rolling stock, worth so much money, and the roadbed in such a condition at the end of the year, we see if we have bettered such things, or whether it is worse than it was. Supposing it is worse, then there has been a lack of attention on the part of the superintendent. For our directions are to keep everything up, and if there is a possibility of our improving anything for the good of the road, then we have to make that improvement.

"When I went into the road, I did so with this understanding: I said that I did not want to receive any more money. They [the Presidents] have received money enough for years back. If I cannot make the road as good as any road ought to be in the country by getting the same money that they have got before, then I do not want to be in the road. How do I make it? I make it by saving of expenditures. If I cannot use the capital of that road for pretty nigh \$2,000,000 a year better than anyone that has ever been in it, then I do not want to be in the road. There is where I calculate to get that money, and it has been so on every road that I have been in yet.

"If you have been running a road, and you spend nine or



ten millions to run it, and if I cannot do it for eight, and do it as well, I am ready to go from the road. That is profit enough for me. That has been my principle with steamships. I never had any advantage of anybody in running steamships, but if I could not run a steamship alongside of another man and do it as well as he for twenty per cent less than it cost him, I would leave the ship."

## X I I I

Like the other moneyed men of his time, the Commodore was faithful to the cure at Saratoga. He might in one season prefer the Congress water, and in another the Hamilton, but he was certain to depart for the spa no later than the first week in July, and to return to the city no earlier than the first week in September.<sup>1</sup> He would rise at 7:30, breakfast at 8:30 (always eschewing the whites of the eggs), and recline in the forenoon upon the piazza of his hotel. He would of course begin the day with a puro, for he was uncommonly fond of his cigar. "When I have to give up smoking," he once declared, "you may give me up."<sup>2</sup> Then, having inhaled his first Havana, he would air his handsome trotters or take a hand at whist. The capitalist is said to have followed this pleasant régime as long ago as 1840.

The railway king invariably patronized the United States Hotel, for James M. Marvin, the proprietor of the house, was particularly attentive to his wants. Indeed, in 1845, Marvin

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underwent the expense of building a clubhouse in the rear of his hotel as a convenience for Vanderbilt and other devotees of whist. There such solid men as Judge Wayne of Georgia, George McWillie of Mississippi, and Reverdy Johnson of Maryland would match their wits against the Commodore. Vanderbilt has been credited with winning as much as \$20,000 a day from his gracious Southern opponents.<sup>3</sup> Upon the conclusion of the War between the States, the millionaire met his fellow magnates: Chester W. Chapin of the Boston and Albany, Azariah Boody of the Baltimore & Ohio, and Joseph Harker of the New York Central. In a magnanimous moment, the capitalist would consent to play with C. K. Garrison!<sup>4</sup> Now and then William Henry would join those gentlemen in his father's parlors, but his brother-in-law Horace F. Clark refused. Clark *gambled* if you will, but not for stakes. Not infrequently, the Commodore would snicker at his son-in-law's penury. "I've just seen the funniest thing," he once guffawed in public. "Clark and three grown-up men playing cards for nothing. The idea of grown-up men!"<sup>5</sup> When, in 1865, the United States Hotel burned to the ground, Vanderbilt and his cronies moved to the Congress Hall. Later, in 1873, he furnished \$50,000 for the reconstruction of the old hostelry. In the new United States, decorated in dangerous opulence, he maintained a suite of rooms in Cottage Number 32. In his last years, the Great Cornerer preferred, as did his partners, five-point euchre to whist.

The Commodore was at Saratoga when Sophia, on the 17th of August, 1868, died of an apoplectic attack in the home of Horace Clark. Dignifying her passing, her husband commanded a private train which reached New York in less than



six hours. Two days later, A. T. Stewart and Horace Greeley served as pallbearers at the funeral. Mrs. Vanderbilt, Greeley observed in the *Tribune*, "lived nearly seventy-four years without incurring a reproach or provoking an enmity."<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding, in the summer of 1869, the seventy-five-year-old Commodore turned his mind to a second marriage. He selected, on the 21st of August, Miss Frank Crawford, a young woman of thirty. Miss Crawford, the great-granddaughter of Phoebe's brother Samuel Hand, had moved from Mobile to New York at the end of the Civil War. If some whispered that she had been previously married, no one could deny that she cultivated pious thoughts. When the Great Cornerer asked her hand, she hesitated coyly and then consented providing that her religious adviser, Dr. Charles F. Deems, could read the service. In the end, as her curate left her telegram unanswered, the two eloped to New London, Ontario, where another minister united them.<sup>7</sup> The bridegroom, even at the altar, did not forget his holdings, for he requested two executives of the New York Central to witness the ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt spent their nuptial night in the most costly parlors of the Vanderbilt House at Syracuse. On the morrow, the newlyweds left in their own train for Saratoga, where they occupied the most tasteful apartments of the Congress Hall.<sup>8</sup> According to all accounts, the aging capitalist and his young bride lived in harmony as well as elegance. Dr. Deems thought the Commodore would have been wiser to wed Mrs. Crawford, Frank's mother. "Oh, no!" the groom rejoined. "If I had married her, Frank would have gone off and married someone else. Now I have them both."<sup>9</sup> Doubtless the second Mrs. Vanderbilt kept a good



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table for her husband. "I don't stuff," he would swear, and yet he would dine on Spanish mackerel, on woodcock, and on venison.<sup>10</sup> At breakfast, he would consume the yolks of three soft-boiled eggs, a cup of black tea with twelve lumps of sugar, toast, and a lamb chop. Apparently he craved sweets: while out driving he would gulp a wineglass full of gin and sugar.<sup>11</sup>

In the coach house at 21 and 23 Fourth Street, in the rear of the mansion at 10 Washington Place, the Commodore kept many of the glorious trotters of the day, numbering among his Hambletonians: Post Boy, Plow Boy, Mountaineer, Doctor, Flying Dutchman, Princess, Mountain Girl and Mountain Boy, the last capable of a half mile in 1.06. On Harlem Lane, the speedway which ran north from Central Park across Macomb's Dam Bridge to Cate's Roadhouse at 162nd Street and Jerome Avenue, the millionaire would elate the populace of the city with the shattering speed of his teams. Occasionally, he would paralyze a timorous broker who did not take naturally to the turf. "Not long ago," a contemporary recorded, "he invited a friend to ride with him. He proposed to cross Harlem Railroad. The Express Train was in sight. In spite of remonstrances, he gave the well known word, and his steeds started with the fleetness of deers. The wheels had scarcely left the track, when whiz went the locomotive by as on the wings of the wind, lifting the hats of Vanderbilt and his friend by the current which it created. *There is not another man in New York who could do that*, the Commodore said. *And you will never do it again with me in your wagon*, the friend replied."<sup>12</sup>

It was doubtless shortly after that rebuke that Vanderbilt

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acquired a taste for racing on the rails. He had made a happy investment in the Wagner Palace Car Company which supplied the sleepers for the New York Central. Now, on prosaic evenings, he attached his Wagnerian parlor car "The Duchess" in the rear of the fleet engine "Flying Devil" with Jim Wood at the throttle.<sup>13</sup> The Commodore was truly fond of locomotives. He named one after himself, and placed his portrait on her headlight.

Under the wholesome influence of his second wife, the magnate devoted fewer evenings to five-point euchre. However, the young bride never ridded her husband of his reliance on mediums.<sup>14</sup> On the very evening of a triumph on the Exchange, Vanderbilt would seek the eerie counsel of clairvoyants. In times of alarm, the capitalist would invoke, desperately, the wraith of his mother. Or he would, at the inspiration of the notorious Staten Island seer Mrs. Tufts, set saltcellars under the legs of his bed as health conductors. Like Mrs. Tufts, the Commodore believed in the terrible magic powers of a lock of hair. Unfortunately not every spiritualist humored the Commodore. "You could build a railroad better than you could play a harp," the magnetic healer Helen Clark tartly reminded the railway king when he rambled too long on the delights of heaven.<sup>15</sup>

Vanderbilt would then unburden his imagination to Miss Tennessee Claflin and her sister Mrs. Victoria Woodhull, two young girls who professed the most frantic tenets of spiritualism, and who would chant at any moment their hallucinations. A vision, Victoria told her friends, invited her to New York. A spirit penetrated her Pittsburgh bedroom, scribbled *Demosthenes* on a marble-top table, and informed her that



a house at 17 Great Jones Street awaited her occupancy. When she arrived at the address, she found all that he had foretold—even to such a detail as the arrangement of the library furniture. And the volume which she chose at random from the bookcase was entitled *The Orations of Demosthenes*. In New York, her sister Tennie met and “magnetized” the Commodore. He glowed with sympathy, and, according to Henry Clews, founded their banking and brokerage house: Woodhull, Claflin & Company. The sisters established their offices in Parlors 25 and 26 of the Hoffman House. Parlor 26 tactfully contained, in addition to oil paintings, statues, upholstered business chairs, and a glazed motto: *Simply to Thy cross I cling*, the portrait of Cornelius Vanderbilt.<sup>16</sup> “It is,” said a reporter interviewing Miss Claflin, “a novel sight to see a woman on the Street as a stock operator, and I presume you find it rather awkward.” “I despise,” the female broker replied, “what squeaming, crying girls or powdered counter-jumping dandies say of me. I think a woman is just as capable of making a living as a man, and I have seen men so vain of their personal appearance and so effeminate that I should be sorry to compare my intellect with theirs. I don’t care what society thinks. I have not time to care. I don’t go to balls or theaters. My mind is in my business and I attend to that solely.”<sup>17</sup> She cannot, incidentally, have approved of Frank Crawford. “Didn’t you promise to marry *me*?” she is said to have reminded the Commodore. “Yes,” the aging millionaire acknowledged, “but the family interfered.”<sup>18</sup>

Within a short while Vanderbilt discovered that Mmes. Woodhull and Claflin relieved him of the responsibility of prophesying the market performance of New York Central.



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“Do as I do,” he advised the widow of an editor who importuned him for a tip. “Consult the spirits.”<sup>19</sup> On another occasion, he recommended that a young lady place all her savings in Central Common. “It’s bound to go up 22%—Mrs. Woodhull said so in a trance,”<sup>20</sup> he assured her. Such mention brought the bankers innumerable accounts. Eventually newspaper notoriety drew so many curious that the two women were compelled to post this sign:

ALL GENTLEMEN WILL PLEASE STATE THEIR BUSINESS  
AND THEN RETIRE AT ONCE

These crowds may have encouraged Victoria to launch *Woodhull and Claflin’s Weekly*. The first issue proposed her for President of the United States. Subsequent numbers, after “exposing in one year nearly every fraudulent scheme that was then in operation,” also stressed two causes very dear to her: Woman’s Suffrage and Free Love. Vanderbilt, according to Mrs. Woodhull, supplied the capital for the weekly, but at the time of the Henry Ward Beecher affair, the Commodore ended his visits to both sisters. Victoria was so indiscreet as to fall madly in love with Mr. Tilton, the husband of the preacher’s beloved, and to proclaim her passion in public.<sup>21</sup>

Eventually the seers withdrew from banking and publishing to live in England. There Tennie married Francis Cook, a widower wealthy from importing India shawls, who later assumed the Portuguese title of Viscount of Montserrat. Victoria wed a respectable banker, John Biddulph Martin, who endowed her, on his decease, with 171,779 pounds sterling.<sup>22</sup>

While Vanderbilt was protecting those female brokers, Jay Gould was projecting the magnificent speculation of his career: a corner in gold. In the spring of 1869, the Erie operator had purchased \$7,000,000 of the metal at 132, and watched the quotation rise eight points.<sup>23</sup> Now he reasoned that if he could discourage the Treasury from releasing the national stores, he might utterly manipulate the market. On the 15th of June, President Grant, traveling to Boston on board Jim Fisk's floating palace the "Providence," occupied the bridal chamber of the steamer and partook of a champagne supper. On this elegant occasion, the Prince of Erie, who had donned lavender kid gloves in honor of the Chief Executive, pleaded, as did the orchid cultivator, for higher prices for gold.<sup>24</sup> Grant, however, could not agree with their interpretation of economics. "The bubble might as well be pricked at one time as another," he murmured over his cigar. Fisk thought otherwise. "Our idea of crashes," he afterward testified, "is to have it all milk and honey with us, and let the other fellow stand it."<sup>25</sup> The two conspirators, relying on another method of influencing Washington, agreed to carry \$1,500,000 in gold as a "convenience" to Abel Corbin, the husband of the President's sister. "Mr. Corbin," Gould observed, "is a very shrewd gentleman, much more far-seeing than the newspapers give him credit for." On the 1st of September, Grant did direct the Secretary of the Treasury to dispose of less of the precious metal. Unhappily Corbin wrote the President so strenuous a letter against any government selling whatever that even the unsuspecting Idol of the Nation guessed at dark dealings. Mrs. Grant hastened to warn Mrs. Corbin that her husband should retire from the market.





*(Brown Brothers)*

660 FIFTH AVENUE: THE CHÂTEAU OF W. K. VANDERBILT I

(Immediately to the right, 666 Fifth Avenue:  
The Château of W. K. Vanderbilt II)





*Above: ALVA AS A SUFFRAGETTE. Below left: ALVA AT THE VANDERBILT BALL. Below right: ALVA'S FIRST HUSBAND (center) AT THE PARIS RACES*

*(Photos Brown Brothers)*





Gould seems to have foreseen that Secretary Boutwell, on 11:24 A.M. on the 24th, would order the sale of four millions of gold.

The *Herald* fixed in these words the horror of Wall Street at the collapse of the Corner on Black Friday: "As the bells of Trinity pealed forth the hour of noon, the gold on the indicator stood at 160. Just a moment later, and before the echoes died away, gold fell to 138. . . . Over the pallid faces of some men stole a deadly hue, and almost transfixed to the earth, they gazed on vacancy. Others rushed like wildfire through the streets, hatless and caring little about stumbling against their fellows. . . ." <sup>26</sup> But the vigilant Gould had already unloaded the greater part of his holdings. Fisk, for his part, honored but one of his many contracts to purchase the metal. Meantime less insolent operators shuddered as they read the ever-declining quotations for securities. Albert Speyer, the demoralized broker of the Prince of Erie, was wandering half-crazed across the floor. "I am Albert Speyer. Some persons have threatened to shoot me. I am here. Now, shoot, shoot!"

It was in that terrible moment that the Vanderbilt dealers moved forward. "Now is the time to go for Central!" The equity, which had fallen twenty points, gradually recovered. "I knew it! I knew it!" Thus a member of a prominent commission house raved his homage to the Commodore. "The old rat never forgets his friends." <sup>27</sup> Exactly what aid the Great Cornerer rendered his allies in the crisis cannot be determined. According to one account, he effected in this emergency a loan of \$10,000,000 from Baring Brothers. <sup>28</sup> "I don't believe he could raise any such amount of money!"

grumbled an incredulous speculator.<sup>29</sup> "I know this," John Morrissey, the notorious gambler, told a reporter: "Mr. Vanderbilt is sustaining his stocks. He was down town all day today at the Bank of New York, and if he had not come to the rescue, I don't know what would have become of the Street."<sup>30</sup> Yet Morrissey is said to have dropped \$500,000 through his investment in Central.<sup>31</sup> Did the Commodore spend \$2,500,000 in behalf of his old brokers?<sup>32</sup> That rumor, repeated in the newspapers, has never been substantiated. In any event, it is unlikely that generosity motivated the capitalist.

Few peers of the railway king thought him open-handed. Once, without consulting a business associate, Vanderbilt subscribed \$100 in his name for the political expenses of a candidate for office. The partner, when notified, willingly furnished the \$100. Later, the friend donated a similar sum for a similar end in his name. That obligation the Commodore refused to meet. "When I give anything, I give it myself." On another occasion, the millionaire offered to carry 1,000 shares of Central for the benefit of an acquaintance, allowing him to sell if at any time he wished to realize on the asset. The acquaintance accepted the attractive proposal only to discover that the magnate urged him, when the stock declined from 115 to 109, to dispose at once of the holding. Reluctantly, he assented. A few days thereafter New York Central, in response to the 80-per-cent stock dividend, soared to an exquisite quotation.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless the American imagination was fast transforming the awful wealth of Cornelius Vanderbilt into a splendid legend. What if the capitalist had not been fastidi-



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ous in attaining his ends? No other millionaire was capable of his display. On Black Friday, the Commodore was very fine. An enthusiastic contemporary recorded: "Sun and sky mock with their brightness the gloom which hangs over the marketplace. It is a day for the velvet turf, and not for the stony pavement. Passing from Wall Street into Central Park on such a day is like going from Tartarus into the fields of Elysium. The distorted and forbidding faces have disappeared, the hoarse cries died away, and in the wide, smooth, winding drives grim business puts on a holiday smile. Standing on a slope covered with verdure, not yet tinged with the sober coloring of autumn, we see approaching a light wagon bowling along at an eight-mile gait drawn by two blood trotters; gazelle-eyed and tender of limb as if desert-born, they tread the earth daintily and their hoofs hardly dent the ground. Behind them, holding the reins with a light and yet firm hand, is seated an old man with a face like a Roman senator. This is Cornelius Vanderbilt. Forgetful apparently of his vast interests that day emperilled, and of the great losses actually suffered, he rides along, cool and carefree, chatting with the blooming lady, his bride, who sits by his side. This speaks the man." <sup>34</sup>

On the 1st of November, 1860, the Commodore consolidated New York Central with the Hudson River on the basis of \$207 a share for the former stock, \$185 for the latter. <sup>35</sup> The Great Cornerer on this occasion increased the capital of the first road by \$8,524,400, that of the second by \$13,623,800. In those times the magnate was considering a monument to his myth in Central Park. He discussed with the architect Arthur Gilman the project of a pillar 625 feet high

to the joint glory of Cornelius Vanderbilt and George Washington.<sup>36</sup> Frank Crawford may have dissuaded him from adding to the fame of our first President. In the end the railway king authorized a majestic memorial to himself.

The Hudson River Railroad announced the unveiling, on the 10th of November, of a series of bronzes at the Saint John's Park Freight Station in lower Manhattan. The statutory portrayed the career of the railroad's president at a cost of \$500,000. Measuring 3,125 square feet, the artistic creation weighed fifty tons. The anchors, 2,000 in number, which tied the bas-relief to the station wall weighed easily four tons. In the center of the masterwork, the sculptor Ernest Plassman and the casters George and Valentine Fischer set a gigantic statue of the Commodore. Upright, he beheld on his right Neptune; on his left, Liberty. Neptune blessed the magnificent ocean liner "Vanderbilt." Liberty paid tribute to the superb locomotive "C. Vanderbilt" with its train of cars.<sup>37</sup>

Long before the crowds congested the plaza before the freight station, Frank Crawford, with her lady friends, was pacing up and down at the windows of the parlors at 145 Hudson Street which faced the ceremony. The guests of honor, including Jim Fisk, Jay Gould, August Belmont, and Henry Clews, could gaze on her proud anxiety as they took their platform seats. But now, twenty-four sailors of the U.S.S. "Tallahassee" unfurled the Commodore's pennant, and the inauguration commenced. "Vanderbilt," Mayor Oakey Hall assured the audience, "is of course not honored for his wealth alone. He is not honored for the bald reason that he is the richest citizen on this continent. No! A thousand times no! Cornelius Vanderbilt has acquired enormous



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riches. How has he employed them? Not ignobly in selfish investments or egotistical accumulations, whose income heightens sybaritish pleasures—not in filling iron chests with title deeds of vast landed estates. He has used them in constant commercial investments!”<sup>38</sup>

Tremendous applause sanctified Oakey Hall’s judgment. Captain de Groot, the Master of Ceremonies, then presented the poet William Ross Wallace, who honored the Commodore with an energetic ode, of which we quote the first stanza:

Mighty monument to conquest—so the Great Republic cries,  
Power orbed on her vast forehead, earnestness burning in her eyes—  
Well it is, my myriad children, with such thoughtful gladness hail  
Thus thy miracle of meanings now resplendent from the veil.  
Well it is the soul of music with a shout of triumph leapt  
And o’er all the New World’s banner a new benediction swept,  
For a conquest-inspiration thou art with no carnage dyed,  
But with Peace’s soft white radiance from the Star of Bethlehem’s  
sky.

’Tis the victory of labor; under yon rejoicing sun.  
O, Americans, already are some deathless trophies won  
On the great world God gave to you; never world was so sublime,  
With its sea-like rivers sounding from the starry keys of time,  
With such giant-belting forests, prairies, mountains, lakes and  
mines,  
Where the far great generous cycles built for you such golden  
shrines.

To *subdue* them is your mission, but not for mere sense alone—  
’Tis that the ideal also may have basement for her throne.  
Galleries round it starred with beauty, temples on each conquered  
steep

Where the soul supremely towering, matter his majestic vassal,  
Sunlight shall have heavenly sweep.  
This is your generation’s epic, Labor evermore thy theme,  
Cantoed by the tunnelled mountains, chartered by the subject stream.



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Grapple then this thy savage nature, through the mind o'er wave on  
plain:

Make him kneel and wreath sweet flowers, reared by science, art,  
religion

In his huge untangled *mane*.

And the last two lines:

O, the vision gives all struggle something white and purple-plumed,  
Even a hurricane of conflict comes a hurricane perfumed.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile the brokers of the New York Stock Exchange were unveiling a statue of their own to the man whom the poet hailed as the Charlemagne of Railways. The several hundred dealers who packed the pit of the Long Room applauded the Chairman E. H. Schaick with delirium when he intoned in language as elegant as that of Mayor Hall: "The Heavens smile on the undertaking of this day, and all nature is jubilant." Ordinarily reticent bankers chuckled at an injunction which enjoined, in Erie-like speech, any and all proceedings. Their clerks chortled openly at the roll call which followed of defunct brokerage houses, for the firms had been obliged to suspend payments after injudicious operations in Vanderbilt shares.<sup>40</sup>

The Stock Exchange Glee Club, in dress suits, white gloves, and yellow rosettes, now sang these words to the tune of "John Brown's Body":

Come all ye jolly brokers, a story I'll relate  
About a famous gentleman who lived in New York State,  
Consolidated railroads were things he did not hate,  
As he went driving on.

His watering machinery as yet has never failed,  
To show our lasting gratitude this statue's now unveiled,

## COMMODORE VANDERBILT

Before Fisk, Gould and Company his courage has not quailed,  
As he goes driving on.

This statue we set up for him, and may it last until  
This very poor old gentleman can his breeches' pocket fill,  
And when he dies, we'll surely find that with an earnest will,  
He'll still go marching on.<sup>41</sup>

"Fellow citizens," S. V. ("Deacon") White reminded other securities dealers, "in all ages of the world, gratitude for great public services has manifested itself in spontaneous popular ovations to the public benefactor. We are assembled here today, not to raise a triumphal arch, under which the conquering hero, with captives in his train, may march amid the plaudits of the plebeians, but to unveil a work of art to patrician eyes, wherein, by the cunning hand of the sculptor, we may at once do honor to a great man, and a great principle which he has made famous; a principle, too, which in turn has made him famous. You all know that he whom we honor commenced life as a waterman, and it is the use of water, not as a beverage, but as an element of wealth, which has been the distinguishing characteristic of the achievements of his later years, and which the artist has striven by an original and unique design to make perpetual. We may say of him not only that he commenced life as a waterman, but that water has been the Central idea of his life. Poets in former times have sung the praises of a fluid, the use of which enables one to see things double, but it has been the good fortune of our artist to embody in a statue more enduring than *monumental brass* the virtues of a fluid, the judicious use of which absolutely doubles the object while you look at it. This is a proud day in the history of American finance. The

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eyes of all nations are now turned in admiration to that which you are permitted to behold as the curtain is raised before you.”<sup>42</sup>

The draped figure who stood behind “Deacon” White then cast aside his shawl. His tongue lolled, his eyes protruded, and his right hand, in a boxing glove, shook as with ague. The mit clutched a watering pot labeled 207, the consolidation price of New York Central.\*

It was in this, the year of his father’s greatest triumph, that the pathetic Cornelius Jeremiah besought Horace Greeley for an introduction to A. T. Stewart. The wretched epileptic hoped that the merchant prince, who had just been nominated Secretary of the Treasury, might grant him the position of assessor for the Ninth District of New York State.<sup>43</sup> Stewart, it will be recalled, was disqualified for the cabinet post under an old law which provided that no one directly engaged in business could supervise the national funds.

Jim Fisk, in the summer of 1869, moved the offices of the Erie Railway to Pike’s Opera House, an \$820,000 edifice at Eighth Avenue and Twenty-third Street. At that opulent address, he directed the affairs of the railroad behind massive, voluptuously carved walnut doors. Sensing a nice advantage in his new location, he installed a troupe of actresses on the stage below who performed nightly in fascinating *tableaux vivants* entitled the Twelve Temptations. Alas! the Prince of Erie no longer monopolized the affections of Josie Mansfield. Coyly bored by her sumptuous carriage rides through Cen-

\* In 1929, upon the destruction of the St. John’s Park Freight Depot, the New York Central System removed the statue of the Commodore to the Grand Central Station. Today, the effigy stares at lower Park Avenue.



tral Park, the young woman was welcoming the attentions of other men. Her great-hearted paramour was ever ready to excuse her peccadillos; indeed he even advanced certain of her admirers in business. One suitor, Edward S. Stokes, obtained a lucrative oil contract with Erie. Stokes was manifestly unworthy of such kindness, for he joined with Josie Mansfield in blackmailing his benefactor. Late in 1871, Josie, anxious for even greater sums, sued her old lover. Early in January, Jim, abandoned by the Venus who once haunted his clarence, reluctantly attended court to testify. Wearily returning from the trial, Fisk strode up the staircase of the Grand Central Hotel only to fall, fatally wounded, the victim of Stokes' revolver.

At a quarter to 7 o'clock on the morning of Sunday, January 7, 1872, James Fisk, Jr., expired in the bedroom attached to Parlor 213 of the hotel. An anonymous writer of those times tells us that Boss Tweed witnessed the capitalist's last moments. Then others arrived. "It was a picture never seen before and never to be seen again: the dead Fisk gazed upon by hundreds, with pity only because of the manner of his death, and the living Gould sitting unmoved by the corpse, to be looked upon with abhorrence by many who passed, for the deeds which he had wrought with him who was dead. At last the ordeal was too severe for even the iron nerves of Jay Gould, and long before the coffin was closed, he disappeared, and was not again seen in the hotel."<sup>44</sup>

Since the Commodore was always comfortable that his teams could pass Fisk's carriage on the Harlem Lane, he may have deeply regretted the murder of his great opponent. Later Vanderbilt admitted, in the presence of a medium, that

he respected his tips as to the market. When the seer conjured up the wraith of Sophia, her husband refused to receive her. "Business before pleasure," he commanded. "Let me speak with Jim Fisk." <sup>45</sup>

## XIV

In the fall of 1871, William Henry Vanderbilt, in company with other solid men, sat on the Committee of Arrangements for a reception in honor of the Grand Duke Alexis.<sup>1</sup> On the evening of the 29th of November, the younger Vanderbilt with his wife and children graced the Monster Ball for the visiting noble at the Academy of Music.<sup>2</sup> The *Herald* pronounced the affair an *ideal of elegant simplicity*. Had not William Backhouse Astor braved the *rippling waves of shimmering toilets*? Alas! the Vanderbilts, ever pursuing political and commercial ends, rarely breathed the refined air of social gatherings. The Commodore was exhibiting now a surprising interest in the Caribbean. Early in 1870, the railway king with Jim Fisk and Daniel Drew attended a vast rally for the "liberation" of Cuba.<sup>3</sup> Later, in 1873, he was quick to protest the action of the Spanish Government in detaining the privateer "Virginus."<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile the Vanderbilts were not neglecting the cause of Grant. William Henry, in April 1872, signed the petition Henry Clews drew up in favor of a second term for the National Hero.<sup>5</sup> "I believed," Clews explained, that "the sacredness of contracts, the stability of wealth, the

success of business enterprise and the prosperity of the whole nation depended upon the election of Grant for President. Of course I knew that Wall Street business would boom in the wake of this general prosperity. Of course I expected to share in Wall Street's subsequent prosperity." The Commodore, curious to relate, was magnanimous to Grant's unlucky opponent Horace Greeley. On learning that the editor had died insane, the capitalist is credited with saying: "Greeley's girls can have any money they want." <sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding, Cornelius Vanderbilt as he advanced in years lost none of his old cunning. "Such cars!" a traveler might scold. "Old, low-roofed, meanly, dingily furnished, smoky, rickety, crazy, abominable! What an odor! Tombs' stench over again. As we proceeded on our way, the leaky old hulk opened its sides to the rain, and very soon the floor was so deep in water." <sup>7</sup> *The New York Times* might rail: "Commodore Vanderbilt is not unknown to fame as the *Poor Railroad King*. Those who have had occasion to pass over his lines will not deny that he is the king of poor railroads. . . . Mr. Vanderbilt's roads are *great roads*, but what are the passengers going to do about it?" <sup>8</sup>

The Great Cornerer could smile at such abuse, for the Harlem was assuming only one-half the cost of lowering the tracks on Fourth Avenue above Forty-second Street. "Reform," the *Times* conceded in 1872, "did not make much headway in the last legislature. Commodore Vanderbilt did." <sup>9</sup> The New York Central is said to have purchased real estate on the future Park Avenue at the most attractive prices.

If the *Times* delivered an unduly vicious attack on the



Commodore, his railroads simply discontinued advertising in the hostile organ.<sup>10</sup> The while, he would dwell with delight on the defeat of Peter Goelet. That landowner, under the mistaken impression that he could bargain with the railway king, declined his offer for the site of the Grand Central Depot. The State Legislature then passed a bill authorizing the New York Central to seize the land in question at an appraised valuation established by a referee. Forever afterward Goelet spoke of Vanderbilt with bitter respect.<sup>11</sup>

“My son,” said the Commodore, enlightening a reporter in the winter of 1873, “when the gang of stock speculators in Wall Street tell you a story about my connection with any other road or enterprise than the New York Central, Hudson and Harlem, don’t believe them. I have all I can do to tend to what I have now, and if I had the Western Union telegraph line, I wouldn’t want to be bothered with it. There is no one in Wall Street who has any right to connect my name with this speculation, and whoever says he has a right to tells a lie.”<sup>12</sup> But the Vanderbilts, Cornelius and William H., were gradually gaining control of the Western Union. The Commodore, as a further diversification of his holdings, invested in the Municipal Gas Company. Boss Tweed was his fellow director in that utility.<sup>13</sup> Vanderbilt obtained, but never used, the franchise to build a subway from Grand Central Depot to the City Hall.<sup>14</sup>

“If we take hold of roads running all the way to Chicago,” Cornelius once warned William Henry, “we might as well go to San Francisco or China.” Eventually, however, the younger Vanderbilt persuaded his father to make a commitment in the shares of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern

and the Michigan Central. The former line connected Buffalo with Chicago along the south shore of Lake Erie; the latter joined Detroit with Chicago over the right of way of the Illinois Central. On the death of Horace F. Clark in the summer of 1873, the Commodore replaced his son-in-law as President of the Lake Shore. In time he controlled the Michigan Central as well. "As trade now dominates the world," wrote Charles Francis Adams II, "and railways dominate trade, his object has been to make himself the virtual master of all, by making himself absolute lord of railways. Had he begun his railroad operations with this end in view, complete failure would certainly have been his reward. Commencing as he did, however, with a comparatively insignificant objective, the cheap purchase of bankrupt stock, and developing his ideas as he advanced, his power and his reputation grew, until an end which at first it would have seemed madness to entertain becomes at last both natural and feasible."<sup>15</sup> Vanderbilt, favoring John D. Rockefeller above the other barons of oil, was granting precious rebates to the South Improvement Company.

The Commodore, as the New York Stock Exchange realized in the spring of 1873, was bound by no foolish loyalty to his own blood. At 2 P.M. on Wednesday, the 16th of April, Barton and Allen, a brokerage house formed by the nephew and grandson of the railway king, suspended payments.<sup>16</sup> "As the crazy brokers from outside rushed in to hear the intelligence"—the *Herald* reported the failure—"one could readily imagine that some splendid *entrepreneur* had been at vast expense to reproduce to the life some infernal scene of Dante's poem. The fact was that with the space of half an



hour, the values of the country had dropped about twenty-five millions of dollars." Late in the day a reporter interviewed Samuel Barton. "The Street," the newspaperman informed the bankrupt, "seems to think it very strange that Commodore Vanderbilt did not stick by you." "I suppose you know he is a relation of ours," Barton declared. "If Mr. Vanderbilt had stuck by us, we shouldn't have failed. But he would not." Manifestly the Great Cornerer could not take the time to rescue his relatives. He had just leased Harlem to the Central at 8 per cent.

"You have heard today, Mr. Vanderbilt, I suppose, of the Wall Street panic?" inquired a reporter who reached the Commodore on the evening of September 18th. The great house of Jay Cooke & Company, overly involved in the Northern Pacific, had just closed their doors. Other suspensions had followed hard upon Cooke's. Richard Schell, long a Vanderbilt broker, had been unable to meet his obligations.<sup>17</sup> In this, the greatest crisis in the history of Wall Street, the Commodore maintained a sublime and irritating calm. "I have only just come in from driving"—he excused himself to a representative of the *Herald*—"and it is all news to me, but after dinner I shall see what the evening papers say." Later the magnate declaimed: "Well, there was no reason why Schell should have failed—wanted to be rich too quick, I suppose. . . . I'll tell you what's the matter. People undertake to do about four times as much business as they can legitimately undertake; of course, they soon get short, and have to bolster up their business as well as they can by robbing Peter to pay Paul. If people will carry on business in this madcap manner, they must run amuck. Building rail-



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roads from nowhere to nowhere,” the self-satisfied capitalist decided, “is not a legitimate undertaking. I am a friend of the iron road, and like to see it stretching to every corner of the United States. All I have to say is, when railroads are to be built, don’t victimize the public. When I have some money, I buy railroad stock, or something else, but I don’t buy on credit. I pay for what I get. People who live too much on credit generally get brought up with a round turn in the long run.”

“Mr. Vanderbilt,” a distressed broker pleaded late at night in the corridors of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, “is the only man who can come to our rescue and re-establish confidence. I hope from the bottom of my heart that he will come down tomorrow, as he did on the occasion of Black Friday.” Now, on the 19th, seventeen firms on the New York Stock Exchange declared bankruptcy.<sup>18</sup> The depositors of the Union Trust Company, a bank closely allied with the Lake Shore Railroad, began to withdraw their savings. Yet the Commodore failed to intervene. He might borrow \$100,000 to aid the Union Trust, but he declined to direct the Lake Shore to pay a call loan of \$1,750,000 due the embarrassed institution.<sup>19</sup> And on Saturday morning, the 20th of September, the Union Trust Company closed. A few minutes before the bank suspended, the railway king passed casually in and out of the doors, smoking a complacent cigar.<sup>20</sup> The offensive rumor obtained, although it was denied, that he had withdrawn \$1,000,000 in the last week.<sup>21</sup>

On Sunday, President Grant, Secretary of the Treasury Richardson, and General Hillhouse, the Subtreasurer in New York, conferred with the moneyed men of the city in Parlors

33, 34, and 35 of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. "I offered," Vanderbilt related, "to extend relief to the financial community to the extent of \$10,000,000. I offered it in this way—to give \$10,000,000 in as good securities as the government could give—provided the government would give \$30,000,000. Somehow, the proposition was not well received."<sup>22</sup> According to an unkind version of the meeting, a thoughtless millionaire embarrassed the Commodore by asking why the Lake Shore had not paid the \$1,750,000 due the Union Trust. In the end the United States Government relieved the tension of Wall Street without the aid of Cornelius Vanderbilt. The Treasury purchased \$20,000,000 in Five-Twenty Bonds.

At last, late in October, the Great Cornerer forwarded his notes for \$1,750,000 to the receiver of the defunct bank.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, *The New York Times* had already arrived at certain unfriendly conclusions.<sup>24</sup> "The Commodore . . . whether he weather the storm or not . . . has lost all prestige and influence. He certainly has not met his obligations, resting on no collateral securities, to the Union Trust Company. And many fear that his own tools and agents on the Street will be left with loads of stocks to escape as they may. Those who remember Mr. Vanderbilt's operations with his steamers to the Isthmus know that he is utterly indifferent to public faith and private contracts. He would leave his credulous friends, as he would his most bitter enemies, to utter ruin, if he could thereby escape himself. He is simply a bold, able, unscrupulous and selfish stock speculator and adventurer, and over his ruin, when it comes, there will be few tears. It is," the *Times* reflected, "useless to moralize over

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the disaster. After the Vanderbilts and Goulds and others have vanished from the Exchange with ruined fortunes and blackened reputations, other adventurers will appear.”

But the Commodore, contrary to the expectations of adversaries, quickly recovered. Rather than lose \$500,000, he disowned a contract to purchase 20,000 shares of Lake Shore.<sup>25</sup> After all, the other members of the pool had not taken up their stock! And Vanderbilt, unmoved by the carping of newspapers, engaged in spirited rate wars with the lesser railway kings. If in 1874 at Saratoga, he gathered his competitors for a conference to end such conflicts, in 1876 his own son joined in demoralizing the rate structure of the carriers. In the interval, he shrewdly improved the New York Central. The cost of the road and equipment, as of September 30, 1870, stood at \$59,765,684.06; six years later, at \$97,822,811.05.

To the end, Vanderbilt expected the untoward from Gould. Upon being informed, in the fall of 1872, that H. F. Clark and Augustus Schell, plotting with the orchid cultivator to manipulate North Western stock, claimed his connivance, the Commodore published this card: <sup>26</sup>

To the editor of *The New York Times*:

The recent corner in North Western has caused some considerable excitement in Wall Street, and has called forth much comment from the press. My name has been associated with that of Mr. Jay Gould and others, in connection with the speculation, and gross injustice has been done me thereby. I beg leave, therefore, to say (once for all) that I have not had either directly or indirectly the slightest connection with or interest in the matter. I have had but one business transaction with Mr. Gould in my life. In July, 1868, I sold him a lot of stock, for which he paid me, and the privilege of a



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call for a further lot, for which he also settled. Since then I have had nothing to do with him, in any way whatever, nor do I mean ever to have, unless it be to defend myself. I have, besides, always advised all my friends to have nothing to do with him in any business transaction. I came to this conclusion after taking particular notice of his countenance. The almost constant parade, therefore, of my name in association with his, seems very much like an attempt to mislead the public, to my injury, and after the publication of this, ignorance or misinformation can no longer be urged as an excuse for continuing this course.

As for Wall Street speculations, I know nothing about them. I do not even see the Street three times in a year, and no person there has any authority to use my name, or to include me in any speculative operation whatever.

C. VANDERBILT.

Gould, successful in cornering North Western, did not in this instance altogether evade the law, for Henry N. Smith, one of the "twisted" (once his fellow broker in Smith, Gould and Martin) had him arrested on the charge of embezzling \$9,726,541.26 from the Erie Treasury.<sup>27</sup>

## XV

"The Lenten Season is a horridly dull season," complained Isaac Brown, the worldly sexton of Grace Church, "but we manage to make our funerals as entertaining as possible." <sup>1</sup> His pewholders, unanimous in applauding his artistic floral arrangements, often hired carriages from his stable to arrive at his interments. A coupé rented from Isaac Brown

could not be called a hack. "I cannot undertake to control society beyond Fiftieth Street"—the sexton defined his authority. Charles F. Deems, the Independent Methodist selected by Frank Crawford to guide her husband, never pretended to the fashion of the Episcopalian worthy. Notwithstanding, Deems was not lacking in guile.

"Where's that pastor at, Frank, whom you wanted to get married by?" the Commodore inquired one evening. "I should think he might call on us."<sup>2</sup> He did, at the suggestion of the millionaire's young wife. Unluckily, on his first visit, the curate broached the subject of a charitable donation. That, he discovered, was an all but fatal *démarche*, for his host handed him a one-way steamboat ticket for the West Indies. The great capitalist, continually importuned by teachers in want of pianos and brides in want of trousseaux, invariably closed his mind to the pleas of the indigent. "I am sorry," he would concede, "for the distress of people, but if I was to begin that sort of business, my door would be blocked from here to Broadway, and I'd have to call on the police to get to my office of mornings."<sup>3</sup>

Meantime Deems persevered. "Now here I am," the curate later exclaimed over coffee in the parlor of the magnate, "I have been preaching for two years within earshot of the Commodore. My little rooms have been overrun. People have said to me: *Why don't you see Mr. Lenox, or Mr. Stewart, or Mr. Astor, or Commodore Vanderbilt, and get some of them to build you a Church of the Strangers?* Not I!" the pastor vibrated. "The Commodore will bear me witness that I have never solicited a dollar from him for any object on earth."<sup>4</sup>

"No, he never has, Frank." Vanderbilt fidgeted.

"And I never shall," the clergyman continued, "as long as there is breath in my body! If he has lived to attain his present age and has not got sense enough to see what I need, and grace enough to send it, he will die without the sight."

The hint sufficed, for the railway king offered the pastor the Mercer Street Presbyterian Church. For an instant, the Independent Methodist suspected the generosity of the donor. Then, in the minister's own words: "After the discharge of the lightning of my anger, I felt that a sort of April shower was coming. My eyes were moistening. It seemed a wonderful providence, for you know we always think it is a wonderful providence if it runs with our ideas." <sup>5</sup>

"Commodore." Deems extended his hand. "If you give that church for the Lord Jesus, I'll most thankfully accept it."

"No," Vanderbilt replied, "I wouldn't give it to you that way because that would be professing to you a religious sentiment I don't feel. I want to give you a church. That's all about it. It is one friend doing something for another friend. Now, if you want to take it that way, I'll give it to you."

"Commodore," the curate promised, "in whatever spirit you give it, I gratefully accept it, but I shall receive it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

At the dedication of the Church of the Strangers, an unenlightened visitor mistook Cornelius Vanderbilt for a bishop. "That's not the first time I have been taken for a clergyman," the millionaire beamed as he adjusted his immaculate white cravat. "No apology is necessary." <sup>6</sup> The church is said to have cost the magnate \$50,000. Frank Crawford now prepared her husband for a more splendid donation.



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"I'd give a million dollars today," the railway king confessed to his clergyman, "if I had your education." 7

"Is that your honest sentiment, Commodore?"

"It is. Folks may say I don't care about education, but it ain't true. I do."

Horace F. Clark entered the parlor at that moment. "Well, I'm glad to hear you admit at last, Commodore," he interrupted, "that there is some benefit in an education. You've always spoken to me as if you had thought it nothing."

"I seem to get along better than half your educated men," Vanderbilt remembered.

"Nevertheless," Clark maintained, "you have made the admission at last. Dr. Deems has drawn it out of you for the first time, and I am a witness to it." Thereupon the son-in-law withdrew.

"If those are really your sentiments," Deems confronted the capitalist, "then you must let me tell you that you are one of the greatest hindrances to education that I know of. Why, don't you see, if you do nothing to promote education, to prove to the world that you do believe in it, there isn't a boy in all the land who ever heard of you, but may say: *What's the use of an education? There's Commodore Vanderbilt, he never had any, and never wanted any, and yet he became the richest man in America.*"

"Will they say that?" the aging millionaire wondered. "But it isn't true. I do care for education, and always have. But what shall I do?"

"Show the world your true sentiments!"

In the spring of 1873, the magnate conferred \$500,000 on the Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church of

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the South at Nashville. All told, he lavished \$1,000,000 on the University, which assumed in gratitude the name of *Vanderbilt*. Doubtless he derived untold pleasure from the admiration of the devout. One God-fearing citizen of Nashville, upon visiting 10 Washington Place, related that the "surrounding was simple and plain, but elegant. The hall was spacious, and lighted with lamps that were free from gaudiness and display, while here and there was statuary marked for simplicity and good taste. Entering his room, where his family and two or three personal friends were gathered, I met for the first time the man whose ability and liberality had endowed our institution. The room was simply elegant, not more tasteful than we would enter in some of our Vine and High Street mansions. I was struck with its unpretending elegance, with family portraits here and there, and chief among them was that of his mother, with the old-fashioned cap, with its frill border and earnest, honest face. Wishing to look upon the pictures of both parents of such a man, I asked for the likeness of his father. Mr. Vanderbilt replied in the most natural way: *My dear sir, his likeness was never taken.* And in manner free from anything like affectation and boasting, he said: *I would give \$100,000 for one of him so good as that of my mother.*" <sup>8</sup>

From time to time the Commodore would pen a playful letter to Bishop H. N. McTyeire, the President of the College. "My kindest regards to your dear lady," the benefactor would conclude. "From hearing Frank talk of her, I have almost got to loving her. So look out!" <sup>9</sup> But the capitalist was never careless in releasing funds. On learning that the bishop owed \$15,000 at 10 per cent, the railway king

fumed: "At 10 per cent! You shouldn't pay 10 per cent ten minutes."<sup>10</sup> Vanderbilt, it should be understood, extended no charity to unlucky business men. When the expansive William C. Ralston of the Bank of California committed suicide, the Commodore scoffed: "Bill Ralston was nothing but a humbug, anyhow."<sup>11</sup>

And, despite his freshly acquired taste for philanthropy, the millionaire concentrated his attention upon his holdings. He might murmur to an attorney: "A million or two is as much as anyone ought to have." But if the lawyer proposed: "Well, Commodore, there is a very easy way of getting rid of the rest," the capitalist would answer: "No, there ain't, for what you have got isn't worth anything, unless you have got the power, and if you give away the surplus, you give away the control."<sup>12</sup> At times the magnate could no longer conceal his anxiety for the future of his property. "I hope our people will be big enough to take care of the Central Road when I am gone," he confided to E. D. Worcester, an official of the system. "The trouble will be that they will try to keep up the dividends too long. They should take care to come down in dividends as soon as there is occasion."<sup>13</sup>

But as the millionaire entered into his eighty-first year, he felt confident of the fate of the Vanderbilt lines. "Dr. Linsly"—he enlightened his physician—"if I had died in 1835 or 1836 or even in 1854, the world would not have known that I had lived, but I think that I have been spared to accomplish a great work that will last and remain, for I have taken care that it is to be secured in such a way that the stock cannot be put upon the market after I die. Had I given one daughter \$3,000,000, and another daughter \$5,000,000,



the first move would have been to have turned Billy out and put Torrance in, and then they would have got to quarreling among themselves, and in six months the stock would have been down to 40." W. H. Vanderbilt entered the room in time to hear the business ability of his brother-in-law Daniel Torrance doubted. "You sit down, Billy," the Commodore commanded in the presence of the doctor. "After I am dead, there will be a great responsibility resting on you. You will find a piece of paper left to direct you—you will find my will—and there are several pieces of paper attached to it, which I charge you to carry out faithfully, as I have directed in the will."<sup>14</sup> When a tactless friend advised the octogenarian: "Mr. Vanderbilt, your stocks will inevitably decline upon the news of your decease," the Great Cornerer smarted: "They oughtn't to. I have not been fool enough to get this together to have it scattered after I've gone. Not a single share will go upon the market after my death."<sup>15</sup> Cornelius Jeremiah, seemingly suspicious of the provisions of the testament, sought in vain to gain his father's ear. "I don't want to see Corneel whether I'm dead or alive," snarled the railway king.<sup>16</sup>

Now, in the spring of 1876, the high, spidery type of gentleman's driving trap had fallen from favor. Our solid men, our after-dinner airers, preferred heavier carriages and plumper, abler horses. The leading citizens of the city were driving carts, stanhopes, phaetons, dennet gigs, and two-wheeled dog carts. On graceful occasions, our millionaires and their ladies rode in broughams or low, long milords. The ironmaster James T. Burden of Troy, wintering in New York, fancied a d'orsay of dark green. Louis Lorillard, of

the tobacco inheritance, maintained a small landau in claret and dark red, with two good men on the box in claret liveries. The exquisite grandchildren of the first John Jacob Astor turned out superb chariots in the English style, with two men on the box and no footmen on the standard behind. William H. Vanderbilt, for his part, kept a handsome, very plain maroon coach.<sup>17</sup> Tragic to relate, the Commodore did not share in this equestrian splendor. On the advice of his physicians, the eighty-two-year-old railway king was refraining from driving his teams through Central Park. On the 24th of November, 1875, William Backhouse Astor had expired in his costly Fifth Avenue mansion. Then, on the 10th of April, 1876, A. T. Stewart drew his last breath in his marble palace at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street. Cornelius Vanderbilt, happy in having accumulated greater wealth than either the real-estate heir or the merchant prince, realized notwithstanding that he was not eternal. At 10 Washington Place, the Vanderbilt family, gathered round a parlor organ, would sing comic Irish or Scotch songs. Once Frank injudiciously selected a hymn dealing with the life of a man past three score years and ten. "Stop! Enough of that!" the Commodore snapped at the end of the first plaintive verse. "No set-up jobs on me. Give me some more lively music."<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in May 1876, a severe intestinal inflammation confined the millionaire to his bed. Alas! what naps the ailing magnate could snatch were fitful. Unfriendly brokers on the New York Stock Exchange, intent on rigging the market value of his shares, were forever announcing his decease. Now an ugly specialist in railroad stocks would sign the name of Charles F. Deems to a telegram proclaiming his



passing.<sup>19</sup> Now, to the same effect, a stealthy securities dealer would falsify the signatures of his two sons.<sup>20</sup> At moments the Commodore wondered whether he had wisely distributed his fortune. "Dan'l," he whimpered to his son-in-law Daniel B. Allen, "after I'm gone there'll be hell to pay."<sup>21</sup>

In this fatal sickness Vanderbilt begged to be relieved by spiritualism. At length Frank invited the magnetician Dr. Frederick Weed to manipulate her husband. "Why have I been deprived of this so long?" the Commodore implored. "It is doing me so much good."<sup>22</sup> The capitalist was now beset with visions. What was indeed the meaning of that enormous horseshoe hanging in eternity? He and his cronies walked on that weird circuit in his dreams, slipping from time to time into eternity below.<sup>23</sup>

Peritonitis put an end, as January began in 1877, to any hopes that Vanderbilt might rally from his disease. The millionaire was turning to the infinite consolation of religion. "I shall never cease to trust in Jesus," he whispered to his wife. "How could I ever let Him go?" Early on the morning of the 4th, the magnate understood that he was leaving this world. "Frank!" he shrilled. "Sing me my hymns!" Mrs. Vanderbilt led in the singing of "Show Pity, O Lord, Forgive" and "Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy." "I am poor, I am needy"—the dying man gasped his favorite tune. "God will grant an easy departure," Dr. Deems reassured the relatives of the moribund as he read the Lord's Prayer. "That was a good prayer," the capitalist muttered. "It expressed your sentiments," said Frank, and she wept. At 10.51 A.M. the wealthiest citizen of the United States passed into eternity. In the afternoon the flags of the Union and Manhattan Clubs



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hung at half-mast in mourning. Morticians, preparing the body for autopsy, encased it in ice.<sup>24</sup>

During the day the Commodore's stocks, defended by his brokers, realized slight gains. And Deems notified the reporters: "He must have been a great man, for like all things that are truly great, he grew and grew in your regard. He had such immense daring, and yet he had the best kind of womanly tenderness, and in matters of faith, he had the simplicity of a little child."<sup>25</sup>

Henry Ward Beecher held Vanderbilt in no such reverence.<sup>26</sup> Conceding that the railway king died with a psalm on his lips, the pastor of Plymouth Church declaimed: "I am very glad he liked those hymns when he died; but if he had sung them thirty years ago, it would have been a good deal better for himself and many others. It is well to think that when an old man dies, he has turned to spiritual things before going, but there are plenty to say, as long as Commodore Vanderbilt could get about, he didn't care for hymns. We are glad when anyone is saved, but what we want is men in the full strength of power and life, and not the fag end."

"I confess," observed the rector of the Church of the Strangers, "that I did not like the tone of Mr. Beecher's talk."<sup>27</sup> I know that when the cloud lay most heavily on the Plymouth pastor, and the evidence against him seemed to be accumulating, and thousands were denouncing him, the Commodore himself always spoke most kindly of Mr. Beecher. Most of the hymns were no new favorites to the Commodore. He was committing them to memory when Mr. Beecher was in his cradle. It was a mistake in Mr. Beecher if he said that Commodore Vanderbilt, as long as he could get about, never

sang any hymns, but when he got crippled, and could not do anything more, then he sang hymns. The second time I was ever in his house, he asked that there should be singing, and while it was going on, I glanced at him, and saw tears rolling down his cheeks."

On Sunday, the 7th of January, Dr. Deems delivered this panegyric of the Great Cornerer: "Whatsoever our revered friend did from selfishness, vanity, pride or worldliness, may have grown to be a large and brilliant thing, and yet each one as it strikes his tombstone will burst like a bubble. What of his good remains? Only what he did in the Lord. I think that it will be a soft pillow in my dying hour that I have one remembrance of this our beloved friend. So lately it was when he took my hand, and looked into my face, and tears started to his eyes as he said: *Dear Doctor, you have never crowded religion on me, but you have been faithful to me.* What was it that made his last moments happy? That every nation, every king and emperor knew of his name and fame? No. That the lustre of his deeds shone like sunlight upon the nations of the earth? No. That his wealth could be counted by millions? No. It was that Jesus Christ had tasted death for him, and that the Godhead was not only his creator but his redeemer, and that like a child, he could lay his head upon the bosom of Jesus and go to sleep.

"If you have millions, I say to you, what are they compared to the wealth of Jesus before the world began? If each of you were a crowned monarch, I would ask you what is your bauble compared to the eternal crown of glory? That man lying there never owned a dime or a foot of ground; he had those things simply as a steward of God. Money can't

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buy love. You can't shed tears over a rich man's bier because he was rich. No. Money can't buy tears. Look at all these men in the galleries who have wrought with him during life and who are brought here by love for his memory. If one grain of love is worth ten thousand of admiration, then Cornelius Vanderbilt was rich indeed. I believe that this man had true repentance to God, had a singularly childlike faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and that, having yielded Him such faith and trust during all his life, he is numbered now with the saints in glory everlasting." <sup>28</sup>

Attendants then placed the casket in the hearse, and the hundreds of friends and employees who had followed the remains from Washington Place to the Church of the Strangers formed the cortège for the ultimate journey to Staten Island. More carriages of mourners descended Broadway than the ferries could receive. Accordingly, many of the clerks of the New York Central never witnessed the interment at the Moravian Cemetery at New Dorp. Pastor Vogler of that chapel uttered a prayer; Deems read the last rites.

He who had been mourned so devoutly abandoned here below no less than \$105,000,000.<sup>29</sup> In this wise, Cornelius Vanderbilt disposed of his estate: To the former Frank Crawford, the Commodore bequeathed \$500,000 in United States Government 5-per-cent bonds, the house at 10 Washington Place, and all its furnishings save the portraits of Phoebe Hand and Sophia Johnson, which passed to Cornelius Vanderbilt II, the oldest son of William Henry. The millionaire provided modestly for his eight surviving daughters. To Phoebe Jane, the wife of James M. Cross; to Emily, the wife of William K. Thorn; to Marie Louise, the widow of Horace



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F. Clark; to Sophia, the wife of Daniel Torrance; and to Mary Alicia, the widow of N. Bergasse LaBau, he devised \$250,000 each in Lake Shore bonds. To Ethelinda, the wife of Daniel B. Allen, he left the income from \$400,000. To Eliza, the wife of George A. Osgood, he left the income from \$300,000. To Catherine, the wife of Gustave Lafitte, he left the income from \$500,000. To Cornelius Jeremiah, he left merely the income from \$200,000. But he conferred \$5,500,000 in railroad stocks on Cornelius Vanderbilt II, and \$2,000,000 each in railroad stocks on Cornelius' three brothers: William Kissam Vanderbilt, Frederick William Vanderbilt, and George Washington Vanderbilt II. The capitalist cared for other relatives with minor bequests.

Then, to William Henry Vanderbilt the railway king gave, devised, and bequeathed all the rest, residue, and remainder of his property, or approximately \$90,000,000! <sup>30</sup>

## *Part Two*

### THE DEATH OF CORNELIUS JEREMIAH VANDERBILT

ON the afternoon of the 2nd of April, 1882, a smart maroon coupé was rapidly descending Fifth Avenue. Passing Thirty-third Street, the elegant equipage stopped at Number 319. William Henry Vanderbilt, accompanied by his son William Kissam Vanderbilt, then alighted and entered the vestibule of the Glenham Hotel. Their arrival confirmed the sinister rumor, already circulating on the lower Avenue, that Cornelius Jeremiah Vanderbilt had committed suicide. A few minutes earlier, Dr. Terry, the medical attendant of the unfortunate, had awakened with a start on hearing the explosion of a revolver in the adjoining apartment. Penetrating immediately the bedroom of Cornelius Jeremiah, Dr. Terry discovered the scion fatally wounded, his Smith and Wesson by his side on the couch.

The epileptic, a widower for the last ten years, had been in the habit of celebrating his birthday with a banquet in the handsome parlors of the caterer Pinard, 6 East Fifteenth Street. The unlucky Vanderbilt would provide, as favors for the ladies, tortoiseshell horseshoes supporting elks' hoofs

filled with costly flowers. Pinard, overjoyed to serve fifteen courses, would furnish dinner cards of satin.<sup>1</sup> Only recently, on the 29th of December, 1881, Cornelius Jeremiah had fêted his fifty-first anniversary in the supper rooms of the restaurateur. Unhappily, his intimates gathered that night in the café recognized that he represented but the débris of his former personality. All too evidently he had been undermined by his many years of nervous illness.<sup>2</sup>

“The last time I saw young Corneel,” Henry Clews remembered, “was at Long Branch, where he took a drive with me one fine afternoon. He spoke feelingly about his wasted life, and concerning the many good friends who had come so often to his rescue, and had got him out of his numerous holes, into which, through misfortune, he had been thrown. He said that all there was of life for him was to live long enough to pay up old scores. He had fully determined to do this, and then, he thought a prolongation of existence would have no further charms for him. It must be said to his credit that he accomplished this work.

“Corneel, although always exclaiming against the old man’s hard-heartedness, had an intense admiration for his father’s abilities, and he was as sensitive as a sunflower when any other person would say a word to disparage the Commodore. While railing constantly at the parsimony of his father, he was as devoted a hero-worshiper of the Commodore as Thomas Carlyle ever was of the greatest of his heroes, and he never grew tired talking of his achievements, with the history of which he was entirely familiar. He had an even more intense hatred against Gould than his father had, and solemnly believed that Gould and Fisk had, during the manipu-



lation of the Erie corner, conspired to assassinate the Commodore.

“Of course, this was one of his many hallucinations, and there was not the least ground for it, but he had got it indelibly on the brain, and he would not tolerate contradiction in that notion any more than in any other opinion which he had got fixed in his morbid mind. He once went into an epileptic fit in the presence of a friend of mine who attempted to reason with him on the improbability of such a man as Gould committing murder.”<sup>3</sup> It would appear that Daniel Drew, unlike his confederates in Erie, never haunted the imagination of Cornelius Jeremiah. The last days, to be sure, of the psalm-loving financier had been inordinately tranquil. He died bankrupt in 1879, and left not a penny of the \$250,000 he once promised to a seminary named in his honor at Madison, New Jersey. According to his biographer Bouck White, injudicious speculation reduced his estate to one watch and chain, worth \$150; one sealskin coat, worth \$150; wearing apparel, worth \$100; and a Bible, hymn-books, and other objects, worth \$130.<sup>4</sup>

“Let us,” graciously observed Henry Clews, “throw the mantle of charity over that tragic scene in the Glenham Hotel, and hope that his soul may have found the rest which, in its poor, afflicted body, it vainly sought for here.” The funeral of the suicide at the Church of the Strangers, and the interment at Hartford, beside Ellen Williams, might be omitted from the history of the House of Vanderbilt, but not the tragic contest of his father’s will which he instituted.

At the end of February, 1877, Cornelius Jeremiah with his sisters Mrs. Allen and Mrs. LaBau appeared before the

Surrogate Judge to object to the probate of the instrument which placed 97 per cent of the Commodore's millions in the hands of William Henry and William Henry's sons. The chief heir, for his part, ridiculed the report that Gould was backing the epileptic's suit with a loan of \$3,000. "Jay Gould is too smart for that," he reminded the newsmen.<sup>5</sup>

In March, the three contestants, possibly influenced by the advice of Chauncey M. Depew, withdrew all complaint of the probate, but in November Mrs. LaBau and her brother were again intent on challenging the testament.<sup>6</sup> The unhappy Cornelius Jeremiah was insisting that William Henry subjected the Commodore to undue influence. The broker Francis Freeman, the Rev. Dr. Sydney Corey, and the railroad executive E. D. Worcester all testified that the deceased was sane, but the epileptic sought to prove that senility weakened his father's intellect. His unscrupulous attorney, not content with dwelling on every sordid detail of the fatal illness of the millionaire, called medium after medium to the stand to prove that the departed was addicted to the lower forms of spiritualism.<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Woodhull had already seized the opportunity to advertise her weekly. "It would make a splendid sensational article," she told a reporter, "if we gave the reasons why Commodore Vanderbilt took such an interest in a paper that expressed the most radical of radical views, but our lips are sealed."<sup>8</sup> New England, ever unfriendly to new money, tasted every tidbit of scandal. The Boston *Herald* sniffed: "The haughty house of the Vanderbilt railway king, which had its origin in a Long Island [sic] cabbage and onion patch, is, for a parvenu race, possessed of quite a respectable collection of family skeletons."<sup>9</sup>

## THE DEATH OF C. J. VANDERBILT

In the spring of 1879, W. H. Vanderbilt is said to have silenced further slander by presenting Cornelius Jeremiah with the income on \$1,000,000, and by giving each of his sisters \$500,000 more than her due. As a further kindness to his younger brother, William Henry forwarded \$61,000 to the daughters of Horace Greeley, canceling the epileptic's indebtedness to the estate of the editor.<sup>10</sup> Alas! W. H. Vanderbilt must needs appease not only his sisters but their wakeful husbands.<sup>11</sup> "William!" one brother-in-law reckoned as he fingered his wife's half million, "I've made a quick calculation here, and I find these bonds don't amount to quite \$500,000. They're \$150 short at the price quoted today." The donor smiled and wrote a check for the balance. "By the way," another husband hinted as he counted his lady's certificates, "if you conclude to give the other sisters any more, you'll see that we fare as well as any of them, won't you?" "Well," William Henry pondered a minute later, "what do you think of that?"

Oblivious of his brother's liberality, C. J. Vanderbilt, in 1880, once again brought suit. The epileptic petitioned for the removal of William Henry as trustee of his fund, and demanded at least \$200,000 to invest according to his own wishes. For reasons of health, Cornelius Jeremiah claimed, he must manage his own money. Fortunately the court did not honor his request.<sup>12</sup>

This, and the earlier litigation, impaired inevitably the standing of the Vanderbilt Family. *The New York Times* printed a really offensive account of the wedding, on November 21, 1877, of William Henry's daughter Florence Adèle to Hamilton McKown Twombly of Boston.<sup>13</sup> What if the



bride wore a gown designed by the very couturière of Nelly Grant? Miss Vanderbilt sported stockings costing \$120 the pair, but to no avail. Said the *Times*: "The invitations were accompanied by a small card which read: *Please present this card at the door of the church.* Just inside the outer edge of the canopy stood two rough individuals shouting *tickets* like at a circus. Gentlemen who were in the least dilatory in producing the pasteboards were roughly hustled back out of the way. One gentleman, a personal friend of Mr. Vanderbilt, was caught by the neck and flung backward over the curb. The uninvited crowd, composed of several thousand persons, the majority of them women, pressed against the canopy upon one side and then on the other so that it was almost thrown over. In these rushes, guests were roughly handled. Men and women in evening attire were squeezed and jostled, their costumes disarranged, and their persons bruised. One lady in a low-necked dress was thrown under the feet of a pair of carriage horses that had just driven up, and placed in immediate danger of her life. Once, the ticket takers and the police were fairly overborne, and several hundred of the rabble succeeded in forcing their way past them into the church." Within, the *Times* noted "a rather miscellaneous assemblage in which a large number of Wall Street brokers and members of German banking houses were prominent. There were also many women of a class that would not be expected to receive invitations." Five of the ushers were "Boston men whom nobody seemed to know."

Three years afterward, an unknown individual who hid behind the pseudonym of Basil Verdendorp published *The Verdendorps*, a wearisome although scandalous novel based

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to a large extent upon the Vanderbilt Will Case. Basil Verdendorp, ever ready to flaunt a French or Greek quotation, may well have been at one time a tutor in the family. Fanny Verdendorp, on *her* wedding day, wore stockings costing \$200 the pair. "Fanny is a good enough sort of girl," conceded one of the characters of the anonymous author, "but I think her charms lie mostly in the Verdendorp gilding."<sup>14</sup>





# *Part Three*

## WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT DOUBLES THE FAMILY FORTUNE

### I

GODLIKE, the millionaires came traveling in their personal Wagner Palace Cars. On Sunday afternoon, the 8th of October, 1882, William Henry Vanderbilt, his sons William Kissam and Frederick William, his uncle Jacob, and eight executives of the New York Central System arrived, en route for Chicago, in Michigan City. The remarkable Locomotive 251, in charge of Engineer Donnelly, was hauling the private train, but reporters, anticipating the pleasure of speaking with one hundred millions, barely noticed the engine and hurried to the Wagner of William Henry.<sup>1</sup>

“I intend taking a trip of some two or three weeks’ duration through the West,” the magnate explained to the journalists. “Just what points I shall visit, I cannot say. I expect to visit Saint Paul, Omaha, Denver, perhaps Salt Lake and intermediate points. We shall only remain in Chicago over night, and in the morning will push on West over the C. B. & Q. Our trip has been very pleasant thus far. We have not attempted to make any great speed at any points, but have

averaged about forty or fifty miles an hour. As we are traveling to see the country and the railroads, we shall travel only during the daytime."

The newsmen, the free-lance space writer Clarence Dresser and the Chicago *Tribune* correspondent John Sherman, then questioned Vanderbilt regarding the Nickel Plate, a line which paralleled the Lake Shore and menaced the earnings of that holding. The millionaire chuckled. "I don't think much about it at all"—he derided the contraption of George I. Seney and other speculators. "It's no good. It's very poorly built. You can't tell me otherwise because I know. Why, who would want to risk their necks on a road built in the slipshod manner it was constructed? And then they talk about its being built so cheaply! That's nonsense. I'll bet you anything it cost more to build the Nickel Plate per mile of single track than it did the Lake Shore. Do I fear its competition? No, not much. I will bet the Lake Shore will earn the first year after the new road opens at least six per cent on its capital, and the new road will not earn expenses. Because why? you ask. Well, I'll tell you. It can't get the business, and it has too many heavy expenses."

"Do you think that there is any truth in the rumor that the road was built to sell?"

"Yes, I do," Vanderbilt admitted. "That's all it could have been built for, because there is no business which it can get that warrants its construction."

"Have you ever been asked to buy it, or any interest in it?"

"No, I cannot say that I have been asked directly to buy

it, but I have been approached by persons who, I think, were to a certain extent authorized, and they gave me to understand that if I wanted to buy it, it could be obtained. I did not want it, however; I have no use for it. My present roads have plenty to do, but I do not know where I could find any business for a road like the Nickel Plate."

The private train had left Michigan City soon after the journalists penetrated the Vanderbilt Wagner. Now, the locomotive was nearing the city of Pullman. "Is there any truth in the reports that the Pullman and Wagner Car Companies propose consolidating?" the newsmen asked.

"Mr. Pullman," William Henry stated, "knows upon what terms he can combine at any time, but a lot of outsiders cannot slip in and get an interest in the companies without proper compensation. The Wagner Cars are meeting with much success, and if a consolidation is brought about, it must be as much to the interests of the Wagner Car people as to the Pullman. There have been several conferences on the subject, but the matter is at present in status quo. What will eventually be done, I can't say."

Engine 251 was now passing the settlements of Pullman. "Mr. Pullman has certainly built for himself a remarkable city," Vanderbilt conceded, "a beautiful one, too, but I cannot be reconciled to a car construction company building a city. It's not according to my ideas of business. I don't believe in a company organized for a specific business going out of its line. Our roads never build their own cars. They have them built for them by companies whose business it is to build cars. When I organize a railroad, I do so to run it as a railroad and not as a car-building company; and one thing,



you may depend you will never see the Wagner Company build a town of Wagner.”

The reporters hoped the capitalist might care to discuss the freight and passenger pool of the major railway systems. “I don’t like that expression *pool*, however,” he contested. “That’s a common construction applied by the people to a combination which the leading roads have entered into to keep rates at a point where they will pay dividends to the stockholders. The railroads”—and here the magnate caressed the rich felt lapel of his jacket—“are not run for the benefit of the *dear public*. That cry is all nonsense! They are built for men who invest their money and expect to get a fair percentage on the same. Freight rates have been altogether too low, and the roads have seen that it was the best policy to get together, arrive at an amicable understanding, and transact their business on business principles: *i.e.*, they will not do business for nothing.”

To Vanderbilt, government rate regulation was at best a suspicious innovation. “I consider that it is an excellent thing to have the rates controlled by the commissioners who are selected by the roads,” he granted, “but I don’t believe in these state railroad commissioners. They are usually ignorant politicians who have to be bought up by the railroads, if any legislation favorable to the roads is desired. The idea of having the roads under the control of any set or sets of state commissioners is nonsense. No cast-iron rules which any state may adopt will do for all the roads which run through it. The government,” he decided, “should appoint a national board of railroad commissioners, men capable to fill the office, who understand the business, and who will adopt rules

of a flexible nature, and who will do all that is possible to encourage the building of roads, and not depress it.”

The newsmen did not forget to question William Henry on the labor policy of his lines. “There is always a lot of shiftless fellows”—he deprecated subversive organizers—“who spend their money in drink and riotous living, who are ready to complain of anything; but, now take the employees on the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. Among them, we have between six and seven hundred engineers who earn from four to five dollars a day. These men are the best which we have in our employ, and are almost all of them members of the Brotherhood of Engineers, which I consider to be an excellent organization. When any difference of opinion occurs between our company and employees, we are always ready to hear them and consider their requests, and when they are reasonable we grant them. When we are making twelve shillings, we are always ready to pay our men ten shillings, but when we make only twelve, we don’t pay fourteen. Our men know this, and they are generally satisfied, and we have little difficulty with them.”

Anti-monopolism provided amusement. “It’s a movement inspired by a set of fools and blackmailers. To be sure, there are some men interested in it whose motives are good, if their sense is not. When I want to buy up any politician, I always find the anti-monopolists the most purchasable. They don’t come so high!”

The executive considered lower passenger rates improbable. “The passenger traffic is only a small part of the business of the railroads,” he reminded the journalists. “No lower rates could be made to pay between New York and

Chicago. Why, sir, do you know that not over one hundred fifty passengers are sent from Chicago to New York per day over all the eastbound rounds? Of course, if any one road could afford to have all this business, it could afford to carry them for fifteen dollars a head."

"Does your limited [to Chicago] pay?"

"No; not a bit of it. We only run it because we are forced to do so by the action of the Pennsylvania road. It doesn't pay expenses. We would abandon it if it were not for our competitor keeping its train on."

"But don't you run it for the public benefit?"

"*The public be damned!* What does the public care for the railroads except to get as much out of them for as small a consideration as possible! I don't take any stock in this working for anybody's good but our own, because we are not. When we make a move, we do it because it is our interest to do so, not because we expect to do somebody else some good. Of course, we like to do everything possible for the benefit of humanity in general, but when we do, we first see that we are benefiting ourselves. Railroads are not run on sentiment, but on business principles, and to pay, and I don't mean to be egotistic when I say that the roads which I have had anything to do with have generally paid pretty well!"

In Chicago, Dresser approached Colonel Nate Reed at the city desk of the *News*. "Don't forget the cussword," the editor insisted. Accordingly, the *News* quoted the magnate verbatim. But the *Tribune*, to be inoffensive, omitted all profanity from Sherman's write-up.

William Henry's careless words quickly became an embarrassment: to his amazement, his apothegm made copy,



America-wide. On his return to New York, he protested to representatives of the Press: "Those who know me and are familiar with my manner of talking do not need to be told that I was greatly misrepresented in that Chicago interview. . . . The idea of my saying that the railroads had to buy up the Commissioners! I never bought a railroad commissioner in my life, nor did my father before me. We never bought a State Legislature, and never went to Albany for that purpose. . . . You ask me about that expression which has been put into my mouth. You say that it has become famous. I never used it, and that is all there is about it. Supposing that the expression which I am reported to have made revealed my real sentiments—do people think that I would publish such an opinion? That is not my way, nor was it my father's!"<sup>2</sup> Reporters who remembered the Commodore's vocabulary smiled. In Chicago, the *News* admonished the capitalist and claimed that the notes of the two interviewers agreed in every respect.<sup>3</sup>

Alas! the unfortunate remark proved to be eternal, for the public did not appreciate the millionaire's point of view. Thenceforward the newspapers credited William Henry with an aggressive instinct he never possessed. In reality, compromise was always his favorite policy: he cringed from rows the Commodore would have hugely enjoyed, and he even attempted to conciliate labor!

At the outset, the Panic of 1873 did not depress the earnings of the Vanderbilt holdings. The Central, despite Charles Francis Adams' distaste for watering, continued paying 8 per cent, and in 1875 was actually prosperous enough to grant a disbursement of 10 per cent. But by 1877, all rail-

roads reacted to the depression. The Central, like the other trunk lines of the East, initiated economies. The Pennsylvania, on the first of June, announced a 10-per-cent reduction in all salaries. A month later the Erie, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the Vanderbilt roads all cut wages to that same extent. The workers, naturally enough, were not indifferent to that news. On the 20th of July, employees of the Erie went on strike at Hornellsville. Immediately, the contagion spread to the Lake Shore.

*The New York Times*, expecting disorder on the New York Central, dispatched a reporter to Saratoga. He interviewed William Henry on the piazza of the United States Hotel.<sup>4</sup>

"There is a great principle involved in this matter," the capitalist proclaimed, "and we cannot afford to yield, and the country cannot afford to have us yield."

The unrest on the Lake Shore was not unexpected. "The men are different on that road, and are not as thoroughly identified with us as the men on the Central. There are intelligent, sensible men among them, but they are not equal as a class to the employees of the Central road."

"Have you any reason to expect that the strike will spread to the Central?" the journalist inquired.

"None at all. The rioters at Buffalo"—the magnate alluded to disturbances already watched by popular militia—"are not railroad men, and our men should not be held responsible for the acts of the thieves and cutthroats in that city. I put great confidence in our men. There is a perfect understanding between the heads of departments and employees, and they appreciate, I think, so thoroughly the identity of interest between themselves and us that I cannot for a mo-

ment believe that they will have any part in this business. I am proud of the men of the Central road, and my great trust in them is founded on their intelligent appreciation of the business situation at the present time. If they stand firm in the present crisis, it will be a triumph of good sense over blind fury and fanaticism. Our business relations with all our men on the Central are shaped, as they fully understand, by the emergencies of the business situation. Their hope, like ours, is for better times. We have simply done what we have been obliged to do, and they comprehend this thoroughly."

Unfortunately, the employees of the Central road disappointed their master. On the 23rd of July, the day during which William Henry spoke to *The New York Times*, workers in West Albany struck for a 25-per-cent increase in all wages. Up to that time, the expert mechanics in those yards had received only one dollar and twenty cents a day; switchmen, trackmen, and laborers, but eighty cents to one dollar. Vanderbilt answered that protest by requesting Governor Robinson to dispatch twelve hundred militiamen, and to arrest John Van Hoesen, the agitator of the strikers.

However, the millionaire was obstinate rather than aggressive. "The public interests should not suffer from any difference between the road and its employees," he advised. "Keep at work until the excitement is over, and a fair conference can be had." <sup>5</sup> When a committee of two of the insurgents approached his parlors in the United States Hotel, he declined to discuss the question of wages. Two days later, the weary workers, discouraged by engineers who did not care to cooperate, surrendered to the magnanimity of their President. The Central then posted this notice at West Albany: "The



employees of this department will report for duty Monday morning, July 30, 1877, at eight o'clock a.m. Those that do not report for duty at the time above specified will be considered as having left the service of the company unless a good excuse or reason be given why they do not." The employees of that and other departments did report for duty. The labor annalist Samuel Yellen has estimated that William Henry ended the strike—without bloodshed—at a cost of but \$250,000, the upkeep of the militia.

On the 1st of August, Vanderbilt explained that the salary reductions would continue in effect until the economic emergency was at an end. But he was anxious to assuage the sentiments of labor. To the employees of the New York Central he bestowed, in proportion to their positions, the sum of \$100,000.

Although William Henry expanded his holdings at a time when Jay Gould was still pursuing properties, he never antagonized his father's opponent. To be sure, he gradually expelled Gould from the Chicago and North Western, but he carefully avoided repeating Erie. Apparently, the Vanderbilts were in no haste to dominate the route to Omaha and the Northwest near Chicago. Their commitment in North Western was serious as early as the spring of 1878: at that date their broker Frank Work owned nearly 12,000 shares, a block second only to the 29,000 shares of the orchid-cultivator.<sup>6</sup> But their possession of the line was not proved until 1881, when Frederick Vanderbilt succeeded Frank Work as director, and Chauncey Depew joined the Executive Committee. Even then, Gould remained a Board Member.<sup>7</sup>

For his part, the one-time lord of Erie was not nearly so

delicate. Amused by the heavy holdings of William Henry in Western Union, Jay Gould joined with Russell Sage to torment that utility. The two created a "competitive" telegraph company, the American Union, which they unloaded on Western Union for fifteen millions of dollars.<sup>8</sup> Bewildered, Vanderbilt resigned early in 1881.<sup>9</sup>

William Henry preferred to enlarge his holdings without that sort of drama. In 1882, he leased the Canada Southern as the eastern link of the Michigan Central, and quietly connected Detroit to Buffalo. Through the Lake Shore, he stealthily purchased Melville Ingalls' Big Four (The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad) and tapped the coal area to the south of Chicago. Early in 1883, again attentive to heavy industry, he tranquilly assumed control of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie.

West of Chicago, Vanderbilt was hesitant. He trifled for a time with the idea of dominating the C. B. & Q., but he cautiously retired from the Union Pacific. When he failed to dislodge Horace Porter from the board of the Rock Island, he fretted. In fine, he satisfied his appetite in that region with the North Western.<sup>10</sup>

Despite his often bashful railroad policy, William Henry never stilled suspicion of his political intentions. "I have," he once pleaded, "forty or fifty million dollars in government bonds, and I am not going to do anything to hurt the government. There," he reassured a reporter, "is a conservative element that can make itself felt."<sup>11</sup> According to the seating arrangement, neither Vanderbilt nor Depew was present at the gastronomically happy, but politically miserable banquet which Gould staged for Blaine at Delmonico's on the eve of

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

the election of 1884.<sup>12</sup> Yet the New York *World*, which excited popular feeling against the Plumed Knight with the headline:

### THE ROYAL FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR BLAINE AND THE MONEY KINGS

insisted on the spiritual presence, at least, of the House of Vanderbilt. Had not Depew campaigned in behalf of Cleveland's opponent? The cartoon by MacDougall which stretched across the first page of Pulitzer's newspaper depicted, alongside capitalists actually on hand, William Henry, a crown on his head, a blazing diamond on his chest, about to gobble from a bowl labeled *Monopoly Soup*. Near him in the drawing sat Depew, who also wore a sparkler.

Vanderbilt, who supported Garfield in the previous election, may have looked with equanimity on this contest.<sup>13</sup> "I know Mr. Blaine," he protested, "but that is no sign I am going to vote for him."<sup>14</sup> "We have reached a time"—the magnate congratulated the victorious Cleveland—"when party amounts to little; the country is above all, and wants an honest government by honest men."<sup>15</sup> Earlier, Depew had urged the President-Elect to merge his law offices with those of the New York Central.<sup>16</sup>

William Henry, who shrunk from publicity his father would have craved, necessarily detested the notoriety of an investigation. However, late in 1878 the Chamber of Commerce of New York City called on the Legislature at Albany to satisfy the public curiosity regarding the New York railroads. The Hepburn Commission, named after the chairman



of the investigators, illuminated not only the pool policy of the New York Central but also the contracts between the Vanderbilt lines and the South Improvement Company of John D. Rockefeller.

Chauncey M. Depew, as spokesman for the House of Vanderbilt, explained that the Central, in battling the Baltimore & Ohio and the Pennsylvania by recently lowering rates from one dollar to ten cents, was acting entirely in the interests of the commercial development of New York City. The attorney then revealed that in June 1877 the major trunklines of the East pooled traffic westbound from Manhattan in this fashion: the New York Central received 33 per cent of the profits, the Erie 33 per cent, the Pennsylvania 25 per cent, the Baltimore and Ohio 9 per cent.

The Hepburn Committee disclosed that in January 1872 the Central, the Erie, the Lake Shore, and the Pennsylvania made an agreement with the South Improvement Company under which the roads promised to pay the oil associates rebates ranging from 40 cents to \$3.07 the barrel. The lines also agreed to grant lower rates to any other corporation, and to maintain the business of the South Improvement against loss or injury in competition. Two years later, the railroads, now even more favorable to the cause of John D. Rockefeller, decided to ignore the element of distance in transporting oil. In 1877, the Erie and the Central, angered that the Pennsylvania should protect the Empire Transportation Company, insisted that the refining of oil was foreign to the functions of a railroad. Eager to placate Rockefeller, the two lines inflicted a cruel rate war on the Pennsylvania until the road surrendered the refining unit.

"I don't believe that by any legislative enactment or by anything else, through any of the states or all of the states, you can keep such men down"—William Henry testified to the genius of John D. Rockefeller. "You can't do it! They will be on top all the time, you see if they are not."

"You think they get on top of the railways?" an investigator smiled.

"Yes; and on top of everybody that comes in contact with them; too smart for me!"

It was obvious that the Rockefeller group offered the limitless investment opportunities which the Commodore dearly loved. But the younger Vanderbilt did not dare trust his wits against theirs. He made a modest commitment only to dispose of it.

On the stand, William Henry feigned ignorance of the agreement between the Central and the oil magnates.

"Do you remember a contract entered into by your company on the eighteenth of January 1872 with a company known as the South Improvement Company?"

"No."

"Do you know of such a company?"

"I have heard of such a company, yes; a long time ago."

"I have here a printed copy of a contract purporting to have been signed by you, personally, as vice-president of the New York Central Railroad; Mr. P. H. Watson, President of the South Improvement Company; and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway Company, by Horace F. Clark, its president. Will you kindly cast your eye over that copy, and tell the committee whether you remember making such a contract as that?"

“I don’t know. I don’t recognize this at all. My name is signed to it here. I supposed it was made. That business at that time was principally done by my father and Mr. Horace F. Clark and Mr. Watson. I remember there was such a company as the South Improvement Company. That is about all I remember about it.”

“Don’t you remember making such a contract?”

“No, I do not. I don’t recognize it at all. If you had asked me under oath, without any knowledge of it, I would have sworn I didn’t make it. I don’t remember. I would have sworn I didn’t remember having made it, I mean.”

To the Hepburn Committee, William Henry had written that “. . . the railroad corporation is organized primarily for the benefit of the people of the state, and the pecuniary condition is secondary, but necessary to arouse the performance of the duty of the state. The profit of the state from the building of railways has been greater than any and all profits received by the shareholders from dividends in stock.” But the Legislature at Albany resented that the younger Vanderbilt owned 87 per cent of the shares of the New York Central. Rumors of impending taxation soon troubled the millionaire.

Later in 1879, brokers suspected that the capitalist, in his eagerness to conciliate anti-monopolists, was ready to place at least 200,000 shares of Central on the market. On November 20, reporters pushed their way past the securities dealers who always crowded the vestibule of the Windsor Hotel. The newsmen questioned William Henry on the possibility of such a sale.<sup>17</sup>

“They say a good many things down in the Street that are not true,” Vanderbilt suggested to the journalists.



“If it isn’t true, how did the rumor start?”

The magnate was polite to that impertinence. “A great many things are said about me that I could never tell how originated. Some of the papers had me nearly killed last Saturday in a railroad car. The story is the same as this: they are both made out of the whole cloth. All I can say is, I am not negotiating to sell a share of New York Central stock.” Nevertheless, all railway issues declined that day on the Exchange. Erie lost  $5\frac{3}{4}$  points; Michigan Central, 4. From 131 New York Central softened to  $129\frac{1}{4}$ . It was evident that the Market did not know what construction to place on the recent clandestine conferences of William Henry with the intelligent young banker J. Pierpont Morgan.

After the downfall of Jay Cooke and Company in 1873, the Street quickly comprehended which house would succeed to the prestige of the defunct Philadelphia firm. As early as October 1870, Junius Spencer Morgan, once a partner of George Peabody in London, challenged the Cooke supremacy by placing an unusually attractive loan for the nascent French Republic. Morgan’s terms were prudent; his profits impudent. He loaned the Provisional Government at Tours \$50,000,000, but he received in exchange 6-per-cent bonds at 80 which he marketed at 85.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the moment Junius’ son J. Pierpont Morgan spoke with William Henry Vanderbilt, financial opinion was prepared for a transaction of any magnitude.

At length, toward 2:45 on the afternoon of November 26, a group of the superb bankers and railroad officials of the United States descended the steps of Drexel, Morgan & Com-

pany and journalists realized that the deal had been concluded. On the Exchange, Central rallied to 135.

“It’s the biggest thing that ever happened in New York,” William Henry admitted that evening to reporters. “I only knew of it at six o’clock. Young Mr. Morgan came here to my house and told me what had been done. I had seen it mentioned in the papers, but I really knew nothing about it until I was notified officially.”<sup>19</sup>

Central was satisfying, the capitalist emphasized.<sup>20</sup> “Some people talk about my getting out of the road—selling my interest—and that sort of thing. It’s all nonsense. I have sold considerably less than half my interest—considerably less than half. That does not look like getting out of the road, does it? Anyone who thinks I am going to get out because of this sale makes a mistake. New York Central is a good property to have, I can tell. It’s a good thing to salt down. I know some of the gentlemen in the syndicate did not get all they wanted. They would have been glad to get more. I suppose some of their shares will be sold, and some, I know, will be salted down. A great many will go to London. The leading banking interests in Europe will be interested in the road. It’s good property. . . . It isn’t every property that pays its owners two per cent every three months. Why, there isn’t so good a piece of railroad property in the world as that New York Central and Lake Shore to Chicago. It don’t owe anything, and its condition is first class.

“We have had a heavy interest in the road, a big interest, and controlled it,” Vanderbilt concluded. “There is a certain feeling among the public about one person having so much. I don’t say it’s wrong—or that it’s right—but there is such a

feeling. I am a man who can understand the public sentiment, and am always ready to meet it. If the public wants anything I can give, I am ready to give it. If the New York Central was not wholly in our hands, I think the public would feel better about it. Everything is put on us: all complaints lodge on our shoulders. Now if there are a number of interests combined on the road, it will be better. We get kicked and cuffed by Congressional Committees, Legislatures, and the Public, and I feel inclined to have others take some of it, instead of taking it all myself."

Since the temperament of William Henry suggested compromise, the sale of the Central stock did not, of itself, astonish the Street. To be sure, after releasing 150,000 shares at 120, and granting an option on 100,000 more within the year on the same terms, he exacted the equivalent of \$18,487,500. But that sum, under the circumstances, exhilarated no one but romantic accountants. Adroit brokers devoted their attention to another aspect of the transaction. While they admired the sagacity of the capitalist in demanding payment in United States Government bonds bearing 4 per cent (an issue, incidentally, above par), and while they smiled at the profits of the financiers who were marketing the shares at 130, they sincerely studied nothing else than the list of the members of the purchasing syndicate. At first glance, that information was trite. In addition to their English affiliate J. S. Morgan & Company, Drexel, Morgan had included August Belmont & Company; Morton, Bliss & Company; Winslow, Lanier & Company; L. Von Hoffman & Company; D. O. Mills; Cyrus W. Field; and Russell Sage, all nominations too obvious to deserve comment. However, Drexel,



Morgan & Company had insisted on yet another name: Jay Gould. His participation in the syndicate could not be misunderstood: William Henry Vanderbilt stood ready to placate the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific. That Gould holding, a network of little lines in the Middle West, had teased time and time again the New York Central by diverting eastbound freight to other systems. And now William Henry declined absolutely to retaliate! The consequences of this policy of appeasement, a policy doubtless urged by Drexel, Morgan & Company, were far-reaching. In the language of the Street, until this date, all the directors of the Central road "wore the Vanderbilt collar." But at the next meeting of the Board, J. Pierpont Morgan, as general agent of the New York Central in New York and London, sat beside Cyrus W. Field and Solon Humphreys, both Wabash representatives.

Although, admittedly, abuse in the Press induced William Henry to part with so much Central, he was tolerant. "If I owned a newspaper," the phlegmatic millionaire once assured Chauncey Depew, "I would have all the others united in attacking me, and they would ruin me, but by being entirely out of the journalistic field, I find that, taking the Press as a whole, I am fairly well treated. I do not believe that any great interest dealing with the public can afford to have an organ." <sup>21</sup>

Albeit, the reports concerning the sorry fate on the Stock Exchange of his second son, W. K. Vanderbilt, concerned the magnate. "I heard," William Henry denounced such tales, "that the bears had him bursted; I heard, too, that they said we did not speak to each other. There is not one word of truth in any of the stories, and it is outrageous that such

lies should be started. William K. has never asked me for a dollar; he has never hinted that he needed help. The rumors about his losses became so hot that this morning I went to him and asked him if he was in trouble. He showed me in a few minutes enough to convince me that he is worth at least eight million dollars above his engagements. Why, his grandfather left him two million dollars, and he has that in his house. See what he has now, and his grandfather has been dead only six years!"<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding, opinion in Wall Street held that William K. Vanderbilt had fallen victim to a market manipulation of Henry N. Smith.<sup>23</sup> Early in 1884, that Vanderbilt conveniently received five million in governments from his father.<sup>24</sup>

Not long after disposing of the 250,000th share of Central, W. H. Vanderbilt decided that, rather than risk a long rate war with the manipulators who controlled the Nickel Plate, he would purchase their property. In effect, only a few days after deprecating the line in his Chicago interview, William Henry authorized J. H. Devereux of the Big Four and Stevenson Burke of the Hocking Valley to enter into negotiations. Late in the fall of 1882, the newspapers revealed that the two agents had acquired the interests of George I. Seney, Walston Brown, William Fleming, and other speculators in the New York, Chicago & St. Louis (the corporate name of the Nickel Plate).<sup>25</sup> Officially, the line became a Vanderbilt road on the following January 5th, when W. K. Vanderbilt, his brother Cornelius Vanderbilt II, and his brother-in-law H. McK. Twombly entered the directorate.<sup>26</sup>

Many financial minds questioned the wisdom of yielding to Seney and his associates. Henry Clews reflected, no doubt,

the attitude of intelligent brokers when he recorded that “. . . the weakest financial operation on his [William H. Vanderbilt's] part, known to the public, was the purchase of the Nickel Plate Road, as regards the time of the transaction, in which he was rather premature. It is now positively known that if he had waited about a month longer the road would have gone into bankruptcy, and have fallen into his lap on his own terms. . . . In such an event, I believe Mr. Vanderbilt would have been saved an immense amount of money, remorse and mental strain. . . . He realized his error when it was too late, and it was a source of great mental anxiety to him in his latter days. He was very sensitive, and nothing afforded him more gratification than a clean, successful transaction, which drew forth public approval, and in the purchase of the Nickel Plate, he was caught napping. It was a mistake for which the Commodore, had he been alive, would never have forgiven him.”<sup>27</sup> Fear that Gould might seize the property is said to have hastened Vanderbilt's decision.

Clews could have excused the purchase of the Nickel Plate. William Henry was already planning his retirement from the railroad business, and was naturally eager for railway peace in his last years. On May 3, 1883, the millionaire resigned from every position with the system save that of Director. Cornelius Vanderbilt II assumed the Chairmanship of the New York and Michigan Centrals; his brother William Kissam Vanderbilt attained the same rank with the Lake Shore.<sup>28</sup> James H. Rutter secured the Presidency of the New York Central; Chauncey M. Depew did not succeed him in that office until early in 1885.

The capitalist, especially benevolent now that he had with-



drawn from active railway affairs, was considerate to reporters that August at Saratoga. On the piazza of the United States Hotel, he presented Chauncey Depew to the journalists. "I am out of active business now," he smiled. "My interests are in the hands of trusty managers, so I give myself no concern about them. I think that I have done my share of work, and so now I am taking a vacation, and really I do not try to keep posted on what is going on. There is Mr. Depew, now. He can tell you all you want to know." <sup>29</sup>

Actually, the mounting freight earnings of the Pennsylvania damaged the serenity which the millionaire affected in the presence of the Press. And Vanderbilt could not dismiss the opening of a new railway parallel to the New York Central. In the winter of 1881, George M. Pullman, outraged that the Vanderbilt roads preferred Wagner cars to his own models, contemplated with supreme satisfaction the beginning of the construction of the New York, West Shore and Buffalo Railroad. The new line, pledged, needless to say, to use Pullman cars, was to extend from Weehawken to Albany up the west bank of the Hudson, touch the Central right of way from Albany to Utica, and reach Buffalo from that city over a shorter route than its competitor. The Chicago industrialist counted on expert financial assistance: he had interested John Jacob Astor III and the banking house of Winslow, Lanier & Company. Accordingly the building of the West Shore, although unusually expensive, was rapid. In January 1882 the line reached Haverstraw; in February of the next year, Winslow, Lanier & Company listed the securities of the railway on the New York Stock Exchange. That June, locomotives were hauling the ultimate in Pullman cars as far as

Kingston; in July, the West Shore ran trains to Albany. But financial opinion reasoned that the new railroad had been inordinately expensive: the construction company for the line, in return for services worth \$29,000,000, had received stocks and bonds whose face value was \$79,500,000. On the last day of 1883, a sorry decline disappointed all holders of West Shore obligations. The 5's sank to 68. Obviously, that pessimistic estimate of the future of the railway heartened William Henry Vanderbilt and consoled him on the opening, in the following February, of West Shore service to Buffalo. The magnate needed that encouragement. In September 1883 he had announced a new railroad of his own to embarrass the Pennsylvania. For once, William Henry was aggressive.<sup>30</sup>

In his ambition to impair the profits of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the head of the House of Vanderbilt relied on the co-operation of the Pittsburgh steel manufacturers who resented the rates of their immediate railway. Burton J. Hendrick, the reliable biographer of Andrew Carnegie, has written that “. . . Carnegie was one of a group of Pittsburgh men who, in the early eighties, subscribed money to build the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie. The line for a period fulfilled all expectations, until the Vanderbilts acquired a majority interest in the stock, and added the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie to the New York Central System. Then the Vanderbilts and the Pennsylvania held a consultation and agreed to maintain time-honored charges at Pittsburgh. In 1883, another blow was struck. At that time William H. Vanderbilt asked for a meeting with Carnegie. The great dictator unfolded plans for a railroad starting at Reading and extending across Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh. No such formidable attack had ever



been launched at the Pennsylvania's 'sphere of influence.' ”<sup>31</sup>

“What do you think of it, Carnegie?” asked Vanderbilt.

“I think so well of it,” replied Carnegie, “that I and my friends will raise \$5,000,000 as our subscription.”

“All right,” said the head of the New York Central, “I’ll put in \$5,000,000.” In this undertaking, Vanderbilt and Carnegie were not alone. The Rockefellers invested \$400,000, Darius O. Mills \$500,000.<sup>32</sup>

Three hundred engineers and thousands of laborers entered the Allegheny Mountains that autumn and began construction of a railway twenty-five miles to the south of the main line of the Pennsylvania between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. This “South Pennsylvania” was to be forty-six miles shorter than the older route. The building, proceeding slowly, preoccupied William Henry Vanderbilt. He did not perceive that the unwanted bonds of the West Shore were passing into the hands of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Furthermore, he did nothing, on June 9, 1884, to save General Horace Porter, President of Pullman’s railway, from the disgrace of managing a bankrupt road.

Once bankrupt, the West Shore became impudent. The trustees, acting in the interests of Pennsylvania stockholders menaced by the South Pennsylvania, commenced a rate war the purpose of which was evident to all: the undermining of the New York Central System. The fare to Albany dropped to \$1.42; then the tariff to Chicago collapsed to \$8.00. The formerly opulent Vanderbilt property was no longer boastful of earnings, which in the last quarter of 1884 descended to \$1.54, and in the initial quarter of the new year, to \$1.05. The Central halved its usual quarterly disbursement of 2



per cent, and softened to under 100 on the New York Stock Exchange.<sup>33</sup>

During these difficulties the intelligent young banker J. Pierpont Morgan was abroad. In England, he could listen to the complaints of perplexed Central shareholders. On his return to the United States, Morgan determined to redeem the reputation of American rails. In July, he summoned Chauncey Depew, just chosen President of the New York Central, to join George Roberts and Frank Thompson of the Pennsylvania on board his magnificent steam yacht: the "Corsair." At that conference, Morgan approached the sublime. He humbled the outstanding railway officials of the nation, and dictated a peace which promised profits to stockholders in both lines. Roberts and Thompson, enervated by his arguments, agreed to assume the South Pennsylvania; Depew, cowed by his eloquence, pledged that he would purchase the West Shore. As a reward for surrendering the South Pennsylvania, Vanderbilt insisted on sound securities paying 3 per cent, equal in amount to the capital he had invested. The indomitable J. Pierpont Morgan secured those very terms for his erring client! And on the 23rd of August, Drexel, Morgan & Company could cable their London affiliate that the warring lines had signed an armistice.<sup>34</sup>

In October, the Attorney General of the State of Pennsylvania opened an investigation of the "Corsair" agreement. Morgan was unwilling to undertake the journey to Philadelphia, but he discussed his triumph with the investigator in the offices, in New York City, of his attorneys.<sup>35</sup>

"When I came from Europe in June of this year," the financier disclosed, "I became satisfied that it was necessary

that something should be done with a view to securing harmony among the trunk lines, and after conversation with various parties here, and also with friends in London, I made up my mind that the principal thing was to secure harmony between the Pennsylvania Central \* and the New York Central. I met Frank Thompson, vice-president of the former, and asked him what could be done toward bringing about a settlement. It was observed that there were two sores that had to be healed—one was the West Shore, and the other was the South Pennsylvania. I told him I thought from my conferences with the New York Central people that they would be willing to take the West Shore if the Pennsylvania was ready to take the South Pennsylvania. Mr. Thompson said he did not think the thing could be done as matters stood then. Mr. Vanderbilt having seen fit to go into Pennsylvania, he did not see why the Pennsylvania people should give him back the money expended for the South Pennsylvania. Afterward, I had an interview with Mr. Depew on the subject of the West Shore negotiations, and also conversed with others. Of course, the New York Central folks repudiated any idea of responsibility for what Mr. Vanderbilt might do with his own money.

“Subsequently, it being believed that sufficient interests could be brought to bear on Mr. Vanderbilt to induce him to supply a majority or more of the South Pennsylvania subscriptions, I made a trip to Philadelphia. That was early in July. I suggested to Mr. Roberts and Mr. Thompson that if the Pennsylvania Railroad Company was prepared to take

\* Officially, the title of the road had not yet been abbreviated.

the South Pennsylvania for bonds or for any other security that bore three per cent, assuming that the sum would amount to \$5,500,000 or over, I thought the thing could be carried through. Mr. Roberts doubted the policy or the ability of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company as such to buy off or in any way interfere with what might be considered rival roads.

“Subsequently, I arranged a meeting on my yacht between Mr. Roberts, Mr. Depew, Mr. Thompson and myself. At that meeting, there was practically an agreement reached on the plan as ultimately carried out. The amount was to be ascertained, the accounts were to be examined with a view to arriving at the cost of construction of the South Pennsylvania Railroad and this cost was to be covered by the securities of the Pennsylvania Company, or something that should pass through that channel. The only thing stipulated was that this security to be given the subscribers should bear the absolute guarantee of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Having obtained this from Mr. Roberts, we went to work again with Mr. Vanderbilt, and early in August the details of what was required to be done were sent to me by Mr. Roberts.”

J. Pierpont Morgan easily circumvented the legal difficulties to his peace. “Mr. Roberts said it would be necessary that someone should become purchaser and not have the purchase made direct by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. As a firm, we could not do this, but as an individual, feeling the importance of what was at stake, I was prepared to do what I could, to give the use of my name and signature, to act as purchaser of one for the other, and the papers bear that out.”



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

The investigator overindulged his curiosity. "Why did you go on your yacht?" he asked Morgan.

"Because it was a convenient place."

"Then it was not for the purpose of having nobody know what business you were engaged in?"

"I do not know that that was a part of the consideration. It might have been. I fixed upon that place, but I do not know of any special purpose in view in that connection."

The influence of J. Pierpont Morgan was now of such consequence that he easily induced William Henry Vanderbilt, as another concession to the Pennsylvania group, to withdraw from a coal-hauling rival of that road: the Reading. In time, the South Pennsylvania right of way fell into disuse and decay, and the countryfolk of the Alleghenies named the unfinished line "Vanderbilt's Folly." \* Of his adventure into Pennsylvania territory, William Henry retained only the Beech Creek Railway, a little railroad he had purchased to tap coal deposits fit for burning by South Pennsylvania engines.



Although William Henry Vanderbilt was aggressive on but one occasion, and then, unlike his father, compromised rather than wage a decisive struggle, his millions, however peaceful, awed the entire civilized world.<sup>36</sup> "I understand you have a man in your country who is worth twenty million pounds, or one hundred million dollars, and it is all in property which he can convert at will into cash," Gladstone once commented to Depew at an English dinner party. "The gov-

\* Currently, a highway is being built on the South Pennsylvania road bed.

ernment ought to seize his property and take it away from him, as it is too dangerous a power for any one man to have. Supposing he should convert his property into money and lock it up, and it would make a panic in America which would extend to this country and every other part of the world, and be a great injury to a large number of innocent people.”

“But you have, Mr. Gladstone,” W. H. Vanderbilt’s advocate reminded the statesman, “a man in England who has equally as large a fortune.”

“I suppose you mean the Duke of Westminster,” the outstanding Liberal replied. “The Duke of Westminster’s property is not as large as that. I know all about his property and have kept pace with it for years. The Duke’s property is worth about ten million pounds, or fifty million dollars, but it is not in securities which can be turned into ready cash, and thereby absorb the current money of the country, so that he can make dangerous use of it, for it is merely an hereditary right, the enjoyment of it, that he possesses. It is inalienable, and it is so with all great fortunes in this country, and thus I think we are better protected here in England than you in America.”

“Ah, but like you in England,” the agile Depew answered, “we in America do not consider a fortune dangerous.”

William H. Vanderbilt himself did not underrate his accumulation. “I am the richest man in the world,” he once confided to an intimate.<sup>37</sup> Yet an expense account could trouble his leisure. One day, fresh from placing fifty million dollars in United States Government securities, he seriously studied the weekly bill the janitor of the New York Central

building presented for lunches. "Was I," the magnate called the Comptroller, Isaac Chambers, "here last Thursday?" "No," Chambers reflected, "for I remember having been up to your house." "Well," William Henry drawled, "do you know that the janitor has charged me with a lunch on Thursday!" And he pushed aside the crisp bonds to make a deduction of forty cents.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps only one capitalist did not stand in awe of the Vanderbilt fortune. One afternoon on Fifth Avenue, Andrew Carnegie observed the railway Croesus on the opposite sidewalk. "I would not exchange his millions," the Scottish entrepreneur mumbled, "for my knowledge of Shakespeare!"<sup>39</sup>

## I I

"There is," the broker Henry Clews observed in the 1880's, "emphatically no place like New York. Here are some of the finest stores in the world, and mansions of which a Doge of Venice or a Lorenzo de' Medici might have been proud. Here are the most beautiful ladies in the world, as well as the most refined and cultivated; here are the finest theatres and art galleries, and the true home of opera is in this country; here is the glitter of peerless fashion, the ceaseless roll of splendid equipages, and the Bois de Boulogne of America, the Central Park; here there is a constant round of brilliant banquets, afternoon teas and receptions, the Germans of the élite, the grand balls with their more formal pomp and



splendid circumstance; glowing pictures of beautiful women and brave men threading the mazes of the dance; scenes of revelry by night in an atmosphere loaded with the perfume of rare exotics, to the swell of sensuous music. It does not take much of this new kind of life to make enthusiastic New Yorkers of the wives of Western Millionaires, and then nothing remains but to purchase a brown stone mansion, and swing into the tide of fashion, with receptions, balls, and kettle-drums, elegant equipages with coachmen in bright-buttoned livery, footmen in top boots, maid-servants and man-servants, including a butler and all the other adjuncts of fashionable life in the great metropolis.”<sup>1</sup>

In those times, out-of-town business men, whenever they visited New York, indulged in interminable carriage rides on Fifth Avenue, and contemplated the homes of the rich. They may have gazed, entranced, at “. . . the rustle and perfume, the glitter and show, the pomp and circumstance of the advanced civilization of the East,” but they wisely included real-estate problems among “the elegancies of metropolitan life.”<sup>2</sup>

One afternoon in 1880, two discerning Pittsburghers, Andrew W. Mellon and Henry C. Frick, drove up the Avenue and noted the costliness of the newer homes: while the patrician names of New York Society were still content with modest brownstone dwellings, the newly rich were demanding sumptuous interiors, sumptuous materials. Neither Frick nor Mellon was ever garrulous. During this drive neither spoke until their brougham neared Fifty-first Street. Then Frick noticed a block-long triple mansion, built in brownstone, but built careless of cost, which extended from Fifty-first to

Fifty-second Street on the west. The block, nearing completion, was to house, in the southern half, William Henry Vanderbilt, and in the northern half, his daughters Mrs. Elliott F. Shepard and Mrs. William D. Sloane.

The magnificence of the three contiguous palaces moved Henry Frick. "I suppose these are really the best residences in the city," he surmised. "I think they are so considered," his companion agreed. Frick pointed to the house prepared for William Henry. "I wonder how much the upkeep of the one on that corner would be?" Mellon declined to calculate that expense. "Say \$300,000 a year?" Frick reckoned. "I should think that would cover it." "It might," Mellon conceded. "That would be six per cent on five millions, or five per cent on six, say a thousand dollars a day; that," Frick concluded, "is all I shall ever want." Andrew Mellon continued silent.<sup>3</sup>

It was in 1879 that Vanderbilt tired of his home on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fortieth Street and decided to erect a residence styled to his wealth. Since he was willing to spend at least \$3,000,000, the architect decorators, the Herter Brothers, and the contractor, J. B. Snook, urged a palace of red and black marble. The millionaire dearly loved those materials, but, as he was haunted by the fear that he might die before the house stood complete, he chose brownstone instead to hasten the construction. A. T. Stewart and William Backhouse Astor had passed away so soon after building their mansions! Eagerly, the capitalist hired 60 foreign sculptors and 700 American laborers to rush the task. At last, late in 1881, 640 Fifth Avenue, 642 Fifth Avenue, and 2 West Fifty-second Street were ready for occupancy.



William Henry Vanderbilt appreciated some of the significance of his architectural effort. He authorized the publication of a luxurious art album, *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection*, which his business associates, including, of course, J. P. Morgan, purchased with solemnity. Luckily, he did nothing to restrain Edward Strahan, who wrote the text to the pictures, and the language of the album was elevating.

"In these volumes," Strahan began, "we are permitted to make a revelation of a private home which better than any other possible selection may stand as a representative of the new impulse now felt in the national life. Like a more perfect Pompeii, the work will be the vision and image of a typical American residence, seized at the moment when the nation begins to have a taste of its own. . . . The country, at this moment, is just beginning to be astonishing." Under those circumstances, it was extremely fortunate that this, "as sincere a home as exists anywhere," enjoyed "one of the finest situations of New York for good air, drainage, not to say social propinquity."

The apologist of the mansion conceded that ". . . its exterior can hardly be said to make any architectural pretension. The style—for those who are particular about a style—may be called Italian Renaissance." Nevertheless, the bronze doors of the vestibule, reproductions by Barbédienne of those by Ghiberti in the Baptistry, Florence, indicated the means of the owner of 640 Fifth Avenue. Formerly the portals to the palace of the Prince of San Donato, they cost no less than \$20,000.

Within, Strahan remarked that ". . . the garish light of noontide is tempered by massive embroideries and picture



panes." But that artistic twilight did not altogether dim the atrium of the edifice. Beyond the columns of red African marble, the galleries of sculpture in the taste of Jean Goujon were distinct. However, rich tapestries veiled the staircase to the anteroom of the rose-paneled library. "The anteroom inspires grave meditations," he noted, while ". . . the library continues to be Greek without being homeless."

The drawing room in Mr. Vanderbilt's wing was easily the *chef d'œuvre* of Herter Brothers. Gold incrustated the massive frames of the doorways; red velvet covered the walls. Then the decorators added two statuettes, carved out of solid ivory by Moreau-Vauthier. "Both are completely adapted for parlor meditation," Strahan judged. "They are completely elegant, refined and artistic, without deep mythological meanings to disturb the equipoise of the evening caller."

Although the hood of the mantel in the Japanese parlor resembled, unmistakably, a Nipponese palace, the bamboo roofwork of the chamber fascinated Strahan far more. "You look around for the idol, a dreaming Buddha, or sanctified dragon; but there are no idols, and no birds; only, clinging everywhere to the lacework of bamboo, are enormous jeweled dragon flies, motionless among the innumerable reeds, as if the tropical summer were too wan to let them stray." The ceiling of the Italian Renaissance dining room was less exciting. Happily, in the nearby pantry the author came upon two-story fireproof safes for the plate, which were "most uninviting to the enterprise of the burglar."

Mrs. Vanderbilt's bedroom ". . . is the culmination of everything elegant, delicate and fresh contained in the house. The furniture is the most choice, the most elegant that the

mansion contains. In this exquisite room, where silver toilet services, embroidered silks and delicate hangings vie with masterly paintings to refresh the attention, it would seem that dreams must be propitious, and the waking pleasant. Among the fragile glitter of the upholstery, where everything seems to start bright and crisp from the hands of the artificer, there is one worn-looking object, and only one; it is the little Bible." A painting by Jules Lefèbvre covered this ceiling. The subject, the Awakening of Aurora, was not questionable, since ". . . this imaginative rendering is expressed in figures . . . from which every trace of the empire of carnal sense has been kept away."

And yet, Mrs. Vanderbilt was not at all anxious to leave her old home at 450 Fifth Avenue. "We don't need a better home"—she unburdened herself to a trusted friend—"and I hate to think of leaving this house where we have lived so comfortably. I have told William that if he wants a finer place for his pictures to build a wing to which he could go whenever he felt inclined; this is too good a house to leave. I will never feel at home in the new place. I remember the first picture we ever bought. We paid ninety dollars for it, and we were afraid to let our friends know how extravagant we had been. I have the picture yet, and there is more pleasure to me in looking at it than all the Meissoniers and other great pictures in the house." <sup>4</sup> To be sure, William Henry never disdained the ninety-dollar canvas, but he delighted, at 640 Fifth Avenue, in an art collection valued at over \$1,500,000. In his new residence, he hung his splendid paintings in a vast gallery.

"Mr. Vanderbilt," according to his adviser on art matters,

S. P. Avery, "had an inherent love for pictures. The first ones he bought when he visited Italy with his father in the 'North Star.' After he returned to America, he often went down to the Tenth Street Studio Building, and assembled works by James Hart, Tait, W. H. Beard, J. G. Brown, Cropsey, Samuel Coleman, Guy and others. He was very fond of Mr. Guy, and finally gave that artist an order to paint an interior of his home at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fortieth Street showing himself surrounded by his family. At the request of Mr. Guy, he allowed the portrait to be exhibited at the National Gallery. There it was seen by irresponsible newspaper critics, who permitted themselves to write many things which were personal to Mr. Vanderbilt and his family, and which proved very annoying." Thenceforward, William Henry's enthusiasm for a national art declined. As Avery tactfully explained: "He did not continue to make a collection of American pictures after he came into the possession of his fortune, since he was able to buy the best and most costly in the world. He decided, at the outset, to procure nothing that was not important."<sup>5</sup>

The art adviser once told reporters that his client ". . . had a very nice taste in regard to subjects. He had no pictures of an indelicate or questionable nature. One picture by Diaz was the only approach to what is called the nude. . . . He liked pictures which told a story, with either strong or cheerful subjects, such as appeal to the imagination of the ordinary individual."<sup>6</sup> In Vanderbilt's time, the Chicago lumber millionaire Martin A. Ryerson was acquiring the achievements of artists who abjured story-telling: the French Impressionists. But the New York capitalist eschewed such



experiments in paint. He proudly preferred the works of Alma-Tadema and Gérôme to any innovations by Renoir or Monet. "It may be very fine"—he rebuked a dealer for recommending the purchase of an unacademic canvas—"but until I can appreciate its beauty, I shall not buy it." <sup>7</sup>

Whenever the carloadings of his railroads warranted a vacation period, William Henry Vanderbilt would sail for France. There, he sought satisfactory relationships with his favorite painters. On one occasion, he journeyed to Fontainebleau, and made the acquaintance of Rosa Bonheur. Since neither the artist nor the millionaire was bilingual, an interpreter translated the sentiments of each. <sup>8</sup>

Mademoiselle Bonheur pleaded that she could not produce immediately the paintings he was ready to commission.

"Tell her," William Henry insisted to the translator, "I must have them. I'm getting to be an old man, and want to enjoy them." At that, Rosa Bonheur laughed: she was the same age as he. "The upshot of it was," Avery later related, "that though he did not offer a dollar more than the price originally agreed upon, he obtained both pictures within the year."

Vanderbilt doted on the precise technique of Meissonier. At an expense of \$188,000, he purchased seven canvases by the aging chronicler of the military glories of Napoléon III. Under those conditions, the capitalist and the painter became good friends. At length, Meissonier even agreed to paint his patron.

The simplicity which William Henry constantly affected won the admiration of his art adviser. "Once in Paris," Avery remembered, "a French nobleman of the Bonaparte family

wrote Mr. Vanderbilt that he wished to sell his houseful of Sèvres china, Louis XVI furniture, Marie Antoinette tables, and numberless articles of *virtu*. Mr. Vanderbilt and I went to this nobleman's house, and he saw all those fine things. When we got outside, he said: *You are supposed to know all about these things, and their intrinsic value, and you know of the associations connected with them. Well, I do not know all that, and I am too old to learn. If I should buy these things, and take them to New York, and tell my friends that this belonged to Louis XVI or to Madame de Pompadour, and should relate all the other things which make them valuable, I should be taking them from a field where they are appreciated to a place where they would not be.*" <sup>9</sup>

Avery's client "was never ashamed to acknowledge with the utmost frankness his former straitened circumstances in life. I went with him to Boucheron, the famous dealer of the Palais Royal, Paris, to see a picture by Troyon which Boucheron had to sell. The picture represented a yoke of oxen turning to leave the field after plowing. Connoisseurs spoke very highly of it, but took exception to the action of the cattle, and said it was forced and unnatural. Mr. Vanderbilt said: *Well, I don't know as much about the quality of the picture as I do about the action of those cattle. I have seen them like that thousands of times.* It was the same when he bought Millet's 'Sower.' The thing that struck him most forcibly was the fidelity to nature of the action of the man in the field sowing the seed." <sup>10</sup>

When William Henry returned from a foreign art tour, Depew would meet the steamer and delight reporters with very humorous speeches. "I am happy, sir"—he once greeted

the magnate at the dock—"to announce that the financial interests of the city have shown their appreciation of your return by putting up Central stock to  $111\frac{3}{8}$ , Lake Shore to  $64\frac{1}{2}$  and Western Union to  $84\frac{1}{2}$ ." At the end of that oration, Vanderbilt glanced at a tasteful floral tribute, the gift, no doubt, of romantic employees. A railroad truck, 5 by 3 feet, with golden brakes, with wheels of gilded wood, with sides painted silver, and labeled N. Y. C. & H. R. R. R., enclosed an artistic bed of cut flowers, in which damask rosebuds, smilax, mignonettes and lilies of the valley predominated.<sup>11</sup>

From time to time, the capitalist would invite solid men to participate in the esthetic pleasures of his gallery. On one occasion, Thurlow Weed, James G. Blaine, Hamilton Fish, and William E. Dodge were among the substantial art lovers who hesitated over Vanderbilt champagne. Unhappily, one guest shattered the harmony of that afternoon. "It is the nicest thing you ever did"—he addressed his host—"to give all your poor friends a chance to come and see you."<sup>12</sup>

The great ladies of New York in those days invariably advertised their receptions by laying red carpets before their doors. At length, on the 11th of December, 1883, the mistress of 640 Fifth Avenue summoned her domestics and ordered them to stretch such a carpet in front of her own palace. This gesture may have annoyed the gentlewomen accustomed to such ceremonies. They had always overlooked the social availability of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Vanderbilt, and now they discovered that the Invaders, in an effort to embellish their residence with floral decorations, had purchased every plant and flower in the greenhouses of the fashionable florist



Klunder. But if certain recalcitrant patricians sulked at home that evening in parlors bare of greenery, many of the spirited members of good society actually accepted Mrs. Vanderbilt's invitation, and satisfied their curiosity as to the splendor of her mansion. To their amazement, they noted, on their arrival, that their hostess had hired the familiar William H. Johnson to call out to carriages: "Supper at twelve thirty, cotillon at three thirty, what time will you leave?" Inside, the guests danced to the orchestra of Lander, whose music was nothing if not Fifth-Avenuable.<sup>13</sup>

Nine days later, William Henry requested 3,000 gentlemen friends to attend an *Art Levée*. The millionaire may have already tired of pomp. According to *The New York Times*, "eleven sharp-eyed men under Detective Heidelberg saw all that was going on." Again, the master of 640 Fifth Avenue instructed his servants to distribute champagne, but he felt more at home when his lackeys fulfilled the requests of temperance men for lemonade.<sup>14</sup> The capitalist liked grandeur to be cozy; indeed, he was even wary of yachts. "No yachts for me!" he chuckled one day to reporters. "No yachts for me, no, sir! They are easy to buy, but they are hard to sell. When I want to go to Europe the 'Britannic' and the 'Georgic' are good enough for me."<sup>15</sup>

Fortunately, William Henry spent immodest sums on trotters, and continued, in that respect, the tradition of the Commodore. If, during the lifetime of his father, he seldom indulged in the turf, once he came into his millions, he met other sportsmen at Du Bois' half-mile track near Macomb's Dam, and, after eyeing the horses of Frank Work and Robert

Bonner, determined that his teams should be the swiftest in the world.

William Henry inherited Small Hopes from the Commodore. As a mate to that gelding by Hambletonian, dam by Flying Cloud, he purchased the gray mare, Lady Mac. Together, the two trotters were superb, covering the mile course at Fleetwood Park in 2:23 $\frac{1}{4}$ . And yet, Frank Work's team, Ed and Dick Swiveler, could pass them on the road.

Vanderbilt found it intolerable that the wheels of his broker's roadwagon should whirl the dust of Jerome Avenue in his face. He acquired Aldine, out of Mother Hubbard by Johnson's Toronto, and, to match, the chestnut mare Early Rose, by Almont, dam by Flying Cloud. For an interval, Frank Work, embarrassed by the insane speed of this rival team (capable of a mile in 2:16 $\frac{1}{2}$ ), avoided racing on the days William Henry hitched Aldine and Early Rose. Then, with Ed and Dick Swiveler, Work dared one day and defeated the pride of the Vanderbilt stable.

William Henry retaliated, immediately, by pairing Aldine with Maude S., a Hambletonian out of Harold by Pilot, Jr. These two trotters decided the dispute with Frank Work. On June 14, 1883, the team did a mile at Fleetwood Park in 2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$  and gained for their owner the world's record. The awful swiftness of Maude S. bewildered the nation.<sup>16</sup> An extravagant cake named after her became one of the popular pastries of the United States.

Strahan, after visiting the Vanderbilt stables at Madison Avenue and Fifty-second Street, congratulated the capitalist on the environment of his trotters. "The high strung animals"—he flattered their master—"converse with their favorite



grooms when in an affable mood." Thus we can believe that William Henry was preparing an enviable old age for Maude S. when Robert Bonner, in 1884, offered \$40,000 for the horse which cost but \$21,000. Vanderbilt hesitated for a time, and then, upon assurances that Maude S. would not be raced for prize money, accepted the pleasant offer. On August 19, in a box car specially designed for her needs by the Wagner works, the mare arrived at the Grand Central Depot. There, her trainer William Bais and her Negro groom Grant officially transferred her to Robert Bonner's stablemen. Almost immediately, she rewarded her new owner. At Lexington, on November 11, she lowered her own—and the world's—record for the mile to 2:09 $\frac{1}{4}$ .<sup>17</sup>

Despite his success with trotters, William Henry Vanderbilt never won the sympathy of the public: he weighed many pounds more than his father. The younger Vanderbilt could never conceive of a monument to himself, 625 feet high, but in 1881 he subscribed, pathetically, \$103,732 for the erection in Central Park of Cleopatra's Needle, an obelisk of the age of Thotmes III. The New York *World* sponsored the project of transporting the shaft from Alexandria to New York, but not all newspapers collaborated. The *Herald* was skeptical: "It would be absurd for the people of any great city to hope to be happy without an Egyptian obelisk. Rome has had them this great while, and so has Constantinople. Paris has one, London has one. If New York was without one, all those great cities might point the finger of scorn at us and intimate that we could never rise to any real moral grandeur until we had gone regularly through the process of having an obelisk." At the dedication, the hymn by Richard



Watson Gilder, the speeches by Secretary of State Evarts and Mayor Grace, and, finally, the distribution of one hundred medals to deserving school children, all accented the educational intent of the donor.<sup>18</sup>

The generosity of William Henry did not end with Cleopatra's Needle. He contributed \$500,000 for the erection of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, now known as the Medical School of Columbia University. He bestowed \$260,000 on Vanderbilt University, and \$50,000 on Saint Bartholomew's Church. And at the summer hotel he visited in the Adirondacks, he would comfort the student waiters with hundred-dollar checks. Furthermore, the capitalist loaned \$150,000 to General Grant when the brokerage firm of the National Hero was in distress.<sup>19</sup>

Early in 1885, William Henry yielded to the recommendations of his physicians, and gave up his drives behind his superb teams. The millionaire was compelled to recognize that the advice of his doctors was sensible. His lower lip was twitching, fearfully, from a paralytic stroke he suffered during the South Pennsylvania anxieties. And his right eye was sightless. In that condition, he could not assume the responsibility of guiding his trotters on Jerome Avenue, trotters which might easily trample on the spectators who gathered near "Judge" Smith's stoop.<sup>20</sup>

It was fortunate that an architectural project diverted the sixty-four-year-old magnate during the evenings he sat, forlorn, in his costly library. William Henry could smile, feebly, at color prints of his Hambletonians, and could then ponder over the construction, on Staten Island, of the family mausoleum. Vanderbilt had decided that the ashes of the

Commodore and his descendants should lie in an Escorial dominating New York Harbor. He invested in a hillock of fourteen acres above the Moravian Cemetery at New Dorp, and commissioned the fashionable architect Richard M. Hunt, to design a worthy tomb.

Hunt, a graduate of the Beaux Arts, and an associate of Hector Lefuel, was entirely anxious to adapt his training to the needs of the richest citizens of the United States. Other architects could complain of the "palace car taste" of the public, but Hunt was intelligent. He warned: "The first thing you've got to remember is that it's your clients' money you're spending. Your business is to get the best results you can following their wishes. If they want you to build a house upside down standing on its chimney, it's up to you to do it, and still get the best possible results."<sup>21</sup> Happily, he could usually impose his conceptions on his patrons.

To his regret, he did not at first succeed in satisfying William Henry Vanderbilt. When the millionaire approached him with the problem of a mausoleum, Hunt freed his gorgeous, if reminiscent imagination and drew the plans of a belligerently extravagant funeral chapel. Such a tomb did not appeal to William Henry. "You entirely misunderstand me, Mr. Hunt; this will not answer at all. We are plain, quiet, unostentatious people, and we don't want to be buried in anything as showy as that would be. The cost of it is a secondary matter, and does not concern me. I want it roomy and solid and rich. I don't object to appropriate carvings, or even statuary, but it mustn't have any unnecessary fancy work in it."<sup>22</sup>

Richard Hunt now realized that Vanderbilt, although he



refused to lie on a Wagnerian pile, would spend at least \$300,000. Such an assurance mitigated any criticism. The architect returned to his atelier and carefully re-created the Romanesque Chapel of Saint-Gilles at Arles. His client passed on that noble, although sensibly less ostentatious plan. William Henry was comfortable that no other tomb in this hemisphere could compare with the Vanderbilt Mausoleum.

On Saturday, the 28th of November, 1885, William Henry attended, as was his wont, the Windsor Turkish Baths on Forty-sixth Street. But he groaned, and flushed unnaturally, as Jimmy Joyce, his favorite masseur, cared for his worn body. "That," the manager of the establishment remarked after the millionaire's departure, "is Mr. Vanderbilt's last bath here."<sup>23</sup> Now, on the morning of December 8, the Croesus arose early. He counted on discussing railway questions with his executives before sitting for his portrait in the studio of the sculptor J. Q. A. Ward. The magnate chatted confidentially with his agents, and later assumed, with his usual ease, the pose Ward requested. At lunch time, neither Mrs. Twombly nor her brother George Vanderbilt noted that their father was in any way indisposed. Robert Garrett of the Baltimore & Ohio system had not been invited for luncheon. He entered 640 Fifth Avenue in the early part of the afternoon, and sought William Henry's company in the Grecian library. The two capitalists were studying the possibility of a Baltimore & Ohio terminal on Staten Island when Chauncey Depew called to pay his respects. Upon learning that his superior was in conference, he left his card and journeyed onward to the offices of the New York Central. As Vanderbilt admitted the feasibility of the terminal, Garrett



willingly prolonged the conversation. In the middle of the afternoon, the two opponents were still defining their attitudes toward the problem at hand. A servant had lit the grate fire, and an occasional flame from the hearth brightened the strangely ruddy countenance of William Henry Vanderbilt. Suddenly, his speech became indistinct, his cheeks purpled, and he toppled, the victim of an apoplectic fit, to the floor. The arch-millionaire lay dead.<sup>24</sup>

William Kissam Vanderbilt and his brother George watched over their father through that night. In the early morning hours, the two other sons, Frederick and Cornelius, met with the funeral director Freeman and agreed that the coffin was to be very plain, of cedar, with elliptical ends, draped in black English broadcloth, and lined with white satin, upholstered. They decided that the casket was to measure six feet three inches long, and nineteen inches wide at the shoulders.

The news of the death did not reach the outside world until after the closing of the New York Stock Exchange. The intelligence transfixed many homes. Hundreds of brokers and thousands of their customers did not even touch the meat course of their dinners, but instead swarmed into the corridors of the Windsor Hotel, where they wildly prophesied the market reaction. According to rumor several outstanding financiers feared a serious decline on the morrow. Chauncey Depew was conferring with J. P. Morgan. Lamps were burning in the parlors of Jay Gould. That manipulator, after consulting with Cyrus W. Field, Russell Sage, and a Morgan partner, formed a pool to purchase 250,000 shares of railway securities in the event the decease damaged quotations.

Such a precaution terrified overimaginative dealers. Until dawn, naïve brokers kept a staff of veteran telegraph operators at the Windsor in constant communication with the European capitals and with other American markets. The New York representative of the Chicago brokerage house of J. T. Lester & Company betrayed his anxiety by maintaining a personal telegraphist at the keys.<sup>25</sup>

J. Pierpont Morgan understood that it was his duty to calm the fever of speculators. "I am quite sure," he announced to newsmen, "that Mr. Vanderbilt's death will have little or no effect upon the stock market, and have so cabled London. Many months ago, he ceased operating in stocks, and, I believe, had no interest in the market. The death will have no effect upon the railroad situation generally, I think, and certainly not upon the West Shore transfer to the New York Central, which has just been completed."<sup>26</sup> Mr. Vanderbilt"—Morgan esteemed his confederate—"was a noble man. I have been associated with him somewhat intimately for the last five years, and few persons realize the breadth of his character. Taking a wide view of affairs, he also had great determination, and would draw a check for ten millions as readily as for five hundred dollars if it was to accommodate a purpose in which he was interested."<sup>27</sup>

In Chicago, P. D. Armour discounted the influence of Vanderbilt's decease upon the Exchange. "The stock market," Armour proclaimed, "is greater than any one man, particularly a dead man."<sup>28</sup> The shares of the departed suffered only inconsequential losses the next morning.

Vanderbilt had been a vestryman of Saint Bartholomew's Church, at Madison Avenue and Forty-fourth Street. There,

three days later, the proper Bishop: Potter read the funeral service. At the conclusion of the rites, the steamer "Southfield" carried the coffin and the family carriages to Staten Island. Since the mausoleum was not yet finished, the cemetery placed the remains *pro tempore* in the Commodore's simpler vault.<sup>29</sup>

Alas! The significance of the life of William Henry Vanderbilt was not realized until after the executors counted the cash and securities he left behind. His estate was found to exceed \$200,000,000! For all his timidity, he had more than doubled his patrimony.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the Commodore, he mentioned charities in his will. To Vanderbilt University, he bequeathed \$200,000. To the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to Saint Luke's Hospital, to the Young Men's Christian Association, to the Protestant Episcopal Mission Society of New York, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and to the Moravian Church at New Dorp, he donated \$100,000 each. To the General Theological Seminary, to the New York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society, to the Home for Incurables, to the Protestant Episcopal Church Mission Society for Seamen in the City and Port of New York, to the New York Christian Home for Intemperate Men, and to the American Museum of Natural History he devised \$50,000 each. These gifts totaled \$1,050,000.

He provided, amply, for his wife and his eight children. His widow could rely on an annual income of \$200,000, and she could dispose of \$500,000 at the time of her death. Furthermore, she could continue living at 640 Fifth Avenue. Her son, George Washington Vanderbilt II, was to inherit



the mansion and its art objects upon her passing. Upon his decease without male issue, his nephew William Henry Vanderbilt II, the son of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, was to succeed to the palace and \$2,000,000. In the event that William Henry Vanderbilt II should not then be living, his brother Cornelius Vanderbilt III was to receive the residence and \$1,000,000.

The testator named his oldest son Cornelius II head of the House of Vanderbilt. In token of his esteem, he bequeathed him the Commodore's Congressional medal, the Commodore's bust by Powers, and \$2,000,000.

To each of his four daughters, William Henry gave the house she was living in. Margaret Louisa, the wife of Elliott F. Shepard, and Emily Thorn, the wife of William Sloane, were residing in the two palaces immediately to the north of 640 Fifth Avenue. Florence Adèle, the wife of Hamilton McK. Twombly, was dwelling at 684 Fifth Avenue, on the southwest corner of Fifty-fourth Street. Her sister Eliza, the wife of William S. Webb, was occupying 680 Fifth Avenue just to the south.

In the seventh paragraph, the deceased established a trust fund of a par value of \$40,000,000, and directed the executors to divide it into eight equal parcels for his eight children. Each child was to receive the income from his parcel during his lifetime, but no child could touch the principal of his trust. Each beneficiary received, however, the power of appointment over his share. Later in the testament he bequeathed, outright, another fund of \$40,000,000, likewise to be divided into eight equal shares for his eight children.

In other paragraphs, he clarified other, minor intentions,

and then, in paragraph 22, really revealed his desires. "All the rest, residue and remainder of all the property and estate, real, personal and mixed, of every description and wheresoever situated, of which I may be seized or possessed, or to which I may be entitled at the time of my decease, I give, devise and bequeath unto my two sons, Cornelius Vanderbilt and William K. Vanderbilt, in equal shares, and to their heirs and assignees to their use forever."<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, Cornelius II and his brother inherited altogether \$67,000,000 and \$65,000,000 respectively.

Henry Clews wasted no sympathy on the other two brothers, who received, like their sisters, but \$10,000,000 each. "The ordinary human mind," the broker commented on the Vanderbilt inheritance, "fails to grasp the idea of such a vast amount of wealth. If converted into gold, it would have weighed five hundred tons, and it would have taken five hundred strong horses to draw it from the Grand Central Depot to the Sub-Treasury in Wall Street. If the first of the Vanderbilts had been a contemporary of old Adam, according to the Mosaic account, and had then started as president of a railroad through Palestine, with a salary of \$30,000 a year, saving all this money and living on perquisites, the situation being continued in the male line to the present day, the sum total of all the family savings thus accumulated would not amount to the fortune left by Wm. H. Vanderbilt, unless this original \$30,000 had been placed at compound interest, and that in a bank from which young Napoleons of finance had been strictly excluded."



## W . H . D O U B L E S   T H E   F O R T U N E

Not long after Hunt completed the Mausoleum, the heirs met to decide on the proper safeguarding of the monument. Only a few years before, body-snatchers had seized and held for ransom the remains of A. T. Stewart. Quite naturally, the Vanderbilts were anxious that their chapel should be secure from such vandalism. They carefully considered every possible precaution against ghouls. Ultimately, they required the lonely watchmen of the tomb to punch a time-clock at fifteen-minute intervals.<sup>32</sup> \*

\* The earlier Vanderbilt tomb, that which the Commodore built, still stands, although in ruins, in the old Moravian Cemetery.





## Part Four

### THE HOUSE OF VANDERBILT ENTERS SOCIETY

#### I

SINCE the doorway of Mrs. William Astor was known to be the most difficult in the city, journalists could never ignore her Annual Ball. "I have never served a better supper," the gifted caterer Pinard confided to reporters on the evening of January 21, 1884. He had prepared, for her \$175,000 silver plate service, the proper boned turkeys, the proper terrapins, and the proper canvasbacks. Klunder, of course, was responsible for the floral splendor of the night, but the care of his majestic plants did not leave him the leisure to chat with the gentlemen of the press.

The favors for the fête, the *Herald* dutifully recorded, were of jewelry, costly and tasteful, prepared with satin fastenings, dated in silver letters. The toilets, need one remark, were of the utmost richness.<sup>1</sup> Such was the elegance upon which Mrs. Astor insisted, and which, on the evening of January 21, was surprisingly cloying. Hitherto, she had always excluded "new people" from her home at 350 Fifth Avenue. Now, the victim of a social revolution, she was admitting to her Annual Ball none other than Mr. and Mrs. William

Kissam Vanderbilt. Fortunately even her most cautious friends would understand that she had no alternative.

Although unmistakably an Invader, Mrs. Vanderbilt had shrewdly exploited every foible of an epoch in which "New York society turned over a new leaf." According to Mrs. Astor's chamberlain, Ward McAllister, "Up to this time, for one to be worth a million of dollars was to be rated as a man of fortune, but now, by-gones must be by-gones. New York's ideas as to values, when fortune was named, leaped boldly up to ten millions, fifty millions, one hundred millions, and the necessities and luxuries followed suit. One was no longer content with a dinner of a dozen or more, to be served by a couple of servants. Fashion demanded that you be received in the hall of the house in which you were to dine, by from five to six servants, who, with the butler, were to serve the repast. The butler, on such occasions, to do alone the head-work, and under him he had these men in livery to serve the dinner, he to guide and direct them. Soft strains of music were introduced between the courses, and in some houses gold replaced silver in the way of the plate, and everything that skill and art could suggest was added to make the dinners not a vulgar display, but a great gastronomic effort, evidencing the possession by the host of both money and taste. . . . Orchids, being the most costly of all flowers, were introduced in profusion." <sup>2</sup>

In 1853, when Caroline Webster Schermerhorn married the second son of William Backhouse Astor, the pleasures of society were simpler. Isaac Brown, the sleek and happy sexton of Grace Church, who was "Admitted free through fash-



## ENTERS SOCIETY

ion's wicket, And skilled at psalms, at punch and cricket," inspired a cheerful poem:

Oh, glorious Brown! thou medley strange  
Of churchyard, ball-room, saint and sinner  
Flying by morn through fashion's range  
And burying mortals after dinner!  
Walking one day with invitations—  
Passing the next at consecrations.  
Dusting by day the pew and missal,  
Sounding by night the ball-room whistle. . . .

Where Brown is found,  
To fashion's eye is hallowed ground.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. John Jacob Astor III curiously neglected the available Brown. If, as Hone recorded, on their wedding evening ". . . the spacious mansion in Lafayette Place was open from cellar to garret, blazing with a thousand lights," nevertheless, in the years that followed their marriage, those Astors lived quietly, although with wines. Fortunately, their sister-in-law Mrs. William Astor took care that the legend of Astor grandeur did not die. Her own husband strangely preferred yacht-cruising to residence in New York, but she determined to become the supreme social authority of the city he forsook.

She did not realize her ideal immediately. In the interval, she observed the *affaires de luxe* of others. Society, in each successive season, chose costlier diversions.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. John Stevens' Fancy Dress Ball at her College Place home, and the Grand Costume Ball at the City Hotel, half-effaced the recollection of the grand party in Lafayette Place. Then, one evening in the winter of 1863, Mrs. Lorillard Ronalds illu-

minated the old Leupp Residence at Madison Avenue and Twenty-fifth Street not only with chandeliers but also with gas-jet stars she stuck in her hair. She cleverly concealed the gas reservoirs in her dress. Shortly afterward, Mrs. Ronalds departed for Paris. At the Court of the Tuileries, her ravishing coiffure consoled the Emperor for his Mexican adventure. Meantime, in New York, Mrs. August Belmont, the daughter of Commodore Perry, was exulting in the superb ballroom of her husband's palace.

Indisputably, Mrs. August Belmont was fastidious. Her opinions, however, did not constitute canons. The "new people" in society found difficulty in penetrating her ballroom, but they did not face a tribunal there. Ward McAllister, a swell from Savannah, fulfilled that need in 1872 when he founded the Patriarch Balls. "The object we had in view," the Georgian *galant* later wrote, "was to make these balls thoroughly representative; to embrace the Old Colonial New Yorkers, our adopted citizens, and men whose ability and integrity had won the esteem of the community. We wanted the money power, but not in any way to be controlled by it. . . . We knew then, and we know now, that the whole success of these Patriarch Balls lay in making them select; in making them the most brilliant balls of each winter; in making it extremely difficult to obtain an invitation to them, and to make such invitations of great value; to make them the stepping stone to the best New York society, that one might be sure that anyone repeatedly invited to them had a secure social position, and to make them the best managed, the best looked-after balls given in this city." <sup>5</sup>

Let no one believe that McAllister alone guided these en-

tertainments. He trembled at the commands of Mrs. William Astor, whose sway over the elegant world was now absolute. In the Savannah dandy's own words: "At this period, a great personage (representing a silent power that had always been recognized and felt in this community, so long as I remember, by not only fashionable people, but by the solid old quiet element as well) had daughters to introduce into society, which brought her prominently forward and caused her at once to take a leading position. She possessed a great administrative power, and it was soon put to good use, and felt by society. I then, for the first time, was brought in contact with this *grande dame* and at once recognized her ability, and felt that she would become society's leader, and that she was admirably qualified for the position. . . ." <sup>6</sup>

Mrs. Astor was wise in choosing Ward McAllister to reveal her wishes to the world. He cherished a high social ideal. "A dinner obligation, once accepted, is a sacred obligation," he believed. "If you die before the dinner takes place, your executors must attend the dinner." His youth, although not moneyed, was exquisite. As the nephew of the gracious conversationalist Sam Ward, he frequented countless parlors and attended innumerable balls in New York City. For an interval, he read the law in Savannah, but, as he later remembered, "Blackstone did not wholly absorb my time. I exercised my memory in the morning and indulged my imagination of an afternoon, breathing soft words to lonely Southern maidens in the piney groves which surround that charming city." Luckily, when he began his practice, he entered his father and brother's legal firm in California. The older McAllister placed this son in charge of dining clients.



"Be sure, my boy, that you always invite nice people," he recommended. The advice was unnecessary. The young barrister already understood that "Fashion selects its own votaries. . . . The talent of and for society develops itself just as does the talent for art. . . . You can give no explanation of this: *one is taken, the other left.*"<sup>7</sup>

His fellow attorneys were soon earning, all together, over \$100,000 a year, but Ward McAllister was not envious of their incomes. Having married the granddaughter of the Thomas Gibbons who once employed the Commodore, he decided on a Grand Tour. In England, he dined with none other than Queen Victoria's chef. In Florence, by bribing a physician in fashion, he obtained invitations to the balls of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Throughout Europe, the Savannah dandy sampled distinguished cellars. In Prussia, he noted that the King ". . . was no judge of wines, as I drank the best, and he was evidently indifferent to it." On his return to the States, he demanded the ultimate from Pinard and the Delmonicos. He supervised, needless to say, a superb repast in honor of the visiting Earl of Rosebery. "You Americans," the Englishman admitted over his Madeira, "have made a mistake. Your emblematic bird should have been a canvas-back, not an eagle." At home, in Georgia, the gastro-nomic wanderer served exquisite *filets de bœuf*. "My dear boy"—an old beau complimented the young connoisseur—"your aunts, the Telfairs, could give breakfasts, but you, you can give dinners."<sup>8</sup>

In New York City, McAllister passed for an attorney. Understandably, his practice languished. He never gave his cases the attention Brown gave his funerals, and, at the end

of the business day, he would carefully snub any socially ambitious clients who dared to greet him on Fifth Avenue. To tell the truth, however, he was not always unkind. "If you see a fossil of a man," he advised, "shabbily dressed, relying solely on his pedigree, dating back to time immemorial, who has the aspirations of a duke, and the fortunes of a footman, do not cut him; it is better to cross the street and avoid meeting him."

For the benefit of newcomers in society, the great swell suggested: "If you want to be fashionable, be always in the company of fashionable people. It is well to be in with the nobs who are born to their position, but the support of the swells is more advantageous, for society is sustained and carried on by the swells, the nobs looking quietly on, and accepting the position, feeling they are there by divine right; but they do not make fashionable society, or carry it on. A nob can be a swell if he chooses; *i.e.*, if he will spend the money; but for his social existence this is unnecessary. A nob is like a poet—*nascitur non fit*—not so a swell—he creates himself!"<sup>9</sup>

It would be ruthless to indicate that McAllister created himself in the ballroom of 350 Fifth Avenue. Under the great candelabra William Astor brought back from Italy, the dandy would review those who did obeisance before his lady's throne—in sober fact, a divan on a raised platform. Since the ballroom held but 400 people, the cipher acquired a sacred connotation. "Why," McAllister enlightened a reporter, "there are only about 400 people in fashionable New York society. If you go outside of that number, you strike people who are either not at ease in a ballroom, or else make

other people not at ease. See the point?" The fop cautioned the ambitious: "A fortune of only a million is respectable poverty." <sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the lavishness of the epoch was gradually corrupting perfect traditions. Thanks to swans, an importer diminished the dignity of a banquet: "Just at this time"—Ward McAllister immortalized the dinner in his memoirs—"a man of wealth, who had accumulated a fortune here, resolved to give New Yorkers a sensation; to give them a banquet which should exceed in luxury and expense anything before seen in this country. As he expressed it: *I knew it would be a folly, a piece of unheard-of extravagance, but as the United States Government had just refunded me \$10,000, exacted from me for duties upon importation I resolved to appropriate it to giving a banquet that would always be remembered.* Accordingly, he went to Charles Delmonico, who in turn went to his *cuisine classique* to see how they could possibly spend this sum on this feast. Success crowned their efforts. The sum in such skillful hands soon melted away, and a banquet was given of such beauty and magnificence that even New Yorkers, accustomed as they were to every species of novel expenditure, were astonished at its lavishness, its luxury.

"The banquet was given at Delmonico's, in Fourteenth Street. There were seventy-two guests in the large ball-room, looking on Fifth Avenue. The table covered the whole length and breadth of the room, only leaving a passageway for the waiters to pass around it. It was a long extended oval table, and every inch of it was covered with flowers, excepting a space in the centre, left for a lake, and a border around the



table for plates. The lake was indeed a work of art; it was an oval pond, thirty feet in length, by nearly the width of the table, inclosed by a delicate golden wire network, reaching from table to ceiling, making the whole one grand cage; four superb swans, brought from Prospect Park, swam in it, surrounded by high banks of flowers of every species and variety, which prevented them from splashing the water on the table. There were hills and vales; the modest little violets carpeting the valleys, and other bolder sorts climbing up and covering the tops of those miniature mountains. Then, all around the inclosure, and in fact above the entire table, hung little golden cages, with fine songsters, who filled the room with their melody, occasionally interrupted by the splashing of the waters of the lake by the swans, and the cooing of these noble birds, and at one time by a fierce combat between these stately, graceful, gliding white creatures. The surface of the whole table, by clever art, was one unbroken series of undulations, rising and falling like the billows of the sea, but all clothed and carpeted with every form of blossom. It seemed like the abode of fairies; and when surrounding this fairyland with lovely young American womanhood, you had indeed an unequalled scene of enchantment.

“But this was not to be alone a feast for the eye; all that art could do, all that the cleverest men could devise to spread before the guests, such a feast as the gods should enjoy, was done, and so well done that all present felt, in the way of feasting, that man could do no more! The wines were perfect. Blue seal Johannisberg flowed like water. Incomparable ’48 Claret, superb Burgundies and amber-colored Madeira, all were there to add to the intoxicating delight of the senses.

Then, soft music stole over one's senses; lovely women's eyes sparkled with delight at the beauty of their surroundings, and I felt that the fair being who sat next to me would have graced Alexander's feast. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

It is possible that the precedent of the importer who demoralized with live birds the art of dining comforted the young girl who married, on April 20, 1875, William Henry's second son: William Kissam Vanderbilt. Alva, the daughter of the Mobile cotton planter Murray Forbes Smith, was unknown in New York society. In wedding a Vanderbilt, she was taking a name which Mrs. Astor did not tolerate. And yet, if swans from Prospect Park could swim on the tables of Delmonico's Restaurant, surely some day the Vanderbilts might hope to attend the Annual Ball at 350 Fifth Avenue.

Fortunately, when Alva spoke of the delights of social grandeur, her husband understood. While W. K. Vanderbilt had received his early schooling at an academy on the Hudson River, he had completed his education at Geneva. On the Continent, he undoubtedly glimpsed the last splendors of the Second Empire. Thus, when he became Second Vice President of the New York Central in 1877, he used his greater income as his wife desired. Together, they beset New York society; intensely, they cultivated the correct people. W. K., during the desperate strike of 1877, was careful to devote an afternoon to polo.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, Alva found a counselor: the Cuban heiress Consuelo Yznaga, known as Lady Mandeville after her marriage to the son of the Seventh Duke of Manchester. And so, late in 1881, Leila, W. K. Vanderbilt's sister, properly celebrated her marriage to Dr. William Seward Webb. The New York *Herald* admitted: "The church



was decked out in floral adornments, and these, with the numerous gas jets blazing in the handsome chandeliers, made the scene as brilliant as the occasion called for, while the bright array of costly toilets and the clusters of diamonds that glistened from every part of the church intensified its brilliancy.”<sup>13</sup> Roosevelts and Iselins in the pews testified to the success of Alva’s campaign for social recognition.

Nevertheless, Mrs. William Astor continued to frown on the Invaders; she was, it would seem, unaware that architecture could accomplish a polite revolution. Content to live in the costly brownstone dwelling her father-in-law erected in 1873, she could scarcely have shared the opinion of Edith Wharton, who found that New York in the ’seventies, “. . . cursed with its universal chocolate coating of the most hideous stone ever quarried,” was a “cramped horizontal grid-iron of a town without towers, porticoes, fountains or perspectives, hidebound in its deadly uniformity of mean ugliness. . . . One of the most depressing impressions of my childhood,” the novelist recalled, “is my recollection of the intolerable ugliness of New York, of its untended streets and the narrow houses, so lacking in external dignity, so crammed with smug and suffocating upholstery. How could I understand that people who had seen Rome and Seville, Paris and London, could come back to live contentedly between Washington Square and Central Park?”<sup>14</sup>

Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt looked on that New York and sensed that architecture could subtly undermine the pretension of the Astors. She demanded more than the morose façade of 640 Fifth Avenue; she turned to Richard M. Hunt for the delicate splendor the triple mansion lacked. He drew



the plans for an exquisite château, strangely reminiscent at once of the Castle of Blois and of the house at Bourges of the fifteenth-century capitalist Jacques Coeur. Overcome by the mundane significance of this commission, Hunt created, on the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street, his *chef-d'œuvre*.

Charles F. McKim, of McKim, Mead and White, relished his rival's masterpiece; he would stroll up the Avenue late at night, and gaze long at the Vanderbilt palace. He said he always slept better for enjoying the sight of it; having taken a look at it, he was ready to return home for another cigar before going to bed.<sup>15</sup> Only Louis Sullivan cared to question Alva's new and noble home. "Must I show you this *French château*, this little Château de Blois, on this street corner, here, in New York, and still you do not laugh?" He referred, unmistakably, to the W. K. Vanderbilt mansion. "Must you wait until you see a *gentleman* in a silk hat come out of it before you laugh? Have you no sense of humor, no sense of pathos? Must I then tell you that while the man may live in the house physically (for a man may live in any kind of a house, physically), that he cannot possibly live in it morally, mentally, or spiritually, that he and his home are a paradox, a contradiction, an absurdity, a characteristically New York absurdity; that he is no part of the house, and his house no part of him?"<sup>16</sup>

The sincere Chicago architect to the contrary, Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt did live *morally, mentally, and spiritually* in their immaculate new French château. Having invested \$3,000,000 in 660 Fifth Avenue, they were confident that the limestone exterior, the entrance and staircase of

Caen stone, the Moorish billiard room and the two-story paneled dining hall would finally unnerve Mrs. William Astor. Number 660 Fifth Avenue, on the year of its completion, did undo the reserve of her chamberlain. Beginning in 1881, Ward McAllister permitted the presence of the Vanderbilts at the Patriarch Balls.

At Delmonico's, on the evening of January 15, 1883, the Patriarchs framed the mirrors of the ballroom with camelias, screened Lander's orchestra with hemlock, but did nothing to conceal Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, who danced with impunity in the company of Mrs. Robert Goelet, Mrs. Albert Gallatin, the Bayard Cuttings, and the Adrian Iselins. At this fête, Mrs. Astor and her daughter Carrie trod the same rose-petaled parquet as the Vanderbilts, and with the Vanderbilts sipped ices and champagne in the upper room of the restaurant. In his gratitude, *Willie K.*, as Alva's husband was now known, did not remove the statue of Richard Hunt which the stone carvers in the employ of Ellen and Kitson had modeled and irreverently placed on a pinnacle above the château.<sup>17</sup>

However, Mrs. Astor had not yet called on the Vanderbilts. Accordingly, Alva, by the beginning of Lent, understood that the time had come to deal the *coup de grâce*. She announced that she would give a Fancy Dress Ball in her new château on the evening of March 26. Conveniently, on the day she issued that communiqué, Central was selling at approximately \$125 the share and was paying an annual dividend of 8 per cent. Instantly the elegant world recognized that her party would annihilate the recollection of all other *affaires de luxe* ever staged in the city. The question of



costumes, to quote *The New York Times*, "disturbed the sleep and occupied the waking hours of social butterflies, both male and female, for over six weeks . . . and even perhaps interfered with that rigid observance of Lenten devotions which the Church demands. Amid the rush and excitement of business, men found their minds haunted by uncontrollable thoughts as to whether they should appear as Robert le Diable, Cardinal Richelieu, Otho the Barbarian, or the Count of Monte Cristo." Meanwhile the ladies were "driven to the verge of distraction in the effort to settle the comparative advantages or the relative superiority from an effective point of view of such characters and symbolic representations as the Princesse de Croy, Rachel, Marie Stuart, Marie Antoinette, the Four Seasons, Night, Morning, Innocence and the Electric Light."<sup>18</sup>

In the feverish weeks before the Ball, the mistresses of many Fifth Avenue mansions organized Quadrilles. Mrs. Astor, who did not suspect the subtlety of Mrs. Vanderbilt, encouraged her daughter Carrie to form the Star Quadrille. Miss Astor and her chums the Misses Beckwith, Hoffman, Marié, Warren, Hall, McAllister, and Mrs. Bryce would dress as Twin Stars in yellow, blue, mauve, and white. On their foreheads, the young girls would bear luminous stars (electrically lit) which would cast an elfin glow on their hair, worn long down their backs. Alva Vanderbilt did not intervene until the Stars had drilled themselves to perfection. She then sent a shudder down the spines of the aristocratic troupe.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt let it be known that inasmuch as the sublime calling card which bore the legend *Mrs. Astor*



had never been deposited on the salver of 660 Fifth Avenue, she could not properly invite either Miss Carrie or her mother to the *affaire de luxe*. Faced with this ultimatum, the Queen of Society thought not of the loftiness of her name, but only of the happiness of her daughter. Rather than disband the Star Quadrille, she summoned her coupé and called at her rival's château. A footman in the blue livery of the House of Astor delivered a visiting card to a domestic in the maroon livery of the House of Vanderbilt, and the grandchildren of the Commodore were forever free of the best society.

Early in the evening of March 26, the fashionable business men of the city scurried, embarrassed, up the steps of their town houses. After spending the late afternoon with hairdressers and costumers, they were returning home clad in the court dress and wigs of the Bourbons and the Valois. Such novel attire fascinated the populace. To spy on the guests as they arrived at the palace, crowds clustered at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-second Street. Their numbers necessitated police squadrons.

Shortly after ten-thirty, the youngest and most impatient of the maskers peered from beneath the curtains of their carriages to see if other early-comers were now halting before the Vanderbilt château. After a few moments of delicious hesitation, the pretty and excited young girls, followed by their youthful admirers, descended and entered the brilliantly lit hall. Soon the clubmen came in hansom cabs, and then whole families in elegant equipages. Maid- and manservants grumbled at the command of Mrs. Vanderbilt which excluded them from the palace, but the gleeful party-goers

naturally paid no attention to that *contretemps*. Occasionally, a fatigued banker ordered his coachman to return at one o'clock, but most gentlemen did not expect their broughams before four.<sup>20</sup>

The mob lingered, ogling, in front of 660 Fifth Avenue until long after the last of the 1200 guests had disappeared from sight. Mrs. Pierre Lorillard wore a Worth gown which changed her into a Phoenix; as she strode toward the vestibule she scattered tinsel ashes and sparks. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin came as Louis XV and Marie Stuart; Mrs. Ogden Goelet as a Polish equestrienne; and Mrs. Paran Stevens as Queen Elizabeth. Ward McAllister, whose daughter was one of Mrs. Astor's Stars, selected the disguise of a sixteenth-century Huguenot Noble. The Duc de Morny bore a title which did not date beyond the Second Empire, but he came clad in the plum velvet of the days of Louis XV. Cornelius Vanderbilt II approached his brother's palace in the court dress of Louis XVI. He had left the offices of the New York Central early enough to change into breeches of fawn-colored brocade trimmed with silver and point d'Espagne and into a waistcoat of reseda trimmed with real silver lace. His wife, as the Electric Light, jostled his diamond-hilted sword. She chose a white satin dress which she trimmed with diamonds. She sheltered her hair with a diamond headdress. Cornelius' sisters were no less splendid. Mrs. Webb was a Hornet in yellow satin; Mrs. Sloane a Bo-Peep in antique brocade; and Mrs. Shepard a Marquise in gold-embroidered olive brocade; while Mrs. Twombly had cleverly quilted her pale-blue satin skirt with diamonds. But William H. Vanderbilt, like the U. S. Grants, arrived in conventional evening attire; he



may never have hoped for acceptance by the House of Astor.

Once inside the château, the party-goers brushed the novel and imposing flowers which Klunder had artfully basketed in the vestibule. In the entrance, and throughout the house, the fashionable florist distributed thousands of the most costly roses. Here, he set a vase of dark crimson *Jacqueminot* and deep pink *Gloire de Paris*; there, he placed an urn of pale *Baronne de Rothschild*. He marvelously transformed the second-story supper room into a tropical forest; he hung profusions of orchids from majestic palm trees. Under that foliage, the Vanderbilt domestics served a collation prepared by the Vanderbilt chefs, and by the pastry cooks of Delmonico's Restaurant.

Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt received, with Lady Mandeville, in the dining hall of the palace. Willie K., in yellow silk tights, yellow and black trunks, a yellow doublet, and a black velvet cloak embroidered with gold, represented the Duc de Guise. By dangling the order of Saint Michael on a black ribbon, he imitated a portrait of the noble in his father's art gallery. Alva, appropriately, now, was a Venetian Princess after a painting by Cabanel. Her underskirt, of white and yellow brocade, shaded from the deepest orange to the lightest canary. Her train of blue satin sank lost in embroidery of gold and Roman red. When photographed in these garments, she surrounded herself with doves. The former Consuelo Yznaga—the Princesse de Croy after a picture by Van Dyck—selected a petticoat of black satin, embroidered with jet, a body of black velvet needlework, and collar and sleeves of Venetian lace. She cast drooping plumes about her Flemish hat.<sup>21</sup>



But now, a military band under the direction of P. G. Gilmore announced the Hobby Horse Quadrille. Mrs. S. S. Howland and her confederates had fastened spurious horses, of life size, to their waists. Although the large bright eyes of the animals were artificial, their hides and manes were genuine. The ladies in this square dance wore red hunting coats and white satin skirts, while the gentlemen exhibited yellow satin knee breeches. Lander, with his orchestra, led the music for the other quadrilles. He played "Disputation" by Weingarten to accompany Mrs. Astor's stars, but for the rival dances, he rendered selections from the operas of Offenbach and Lecoq. Such melodies excited, exquisitely, the imagination of fashionable women. Mrs. Lawrence Perkins and her troupe performed as humorous characters from Mother Goose. Mrs. Fernando Yznaga (Consuelo's sister-in-law and Alva's sister) measured, with her partners, the tread of an Opéra Bouffe Quadrille. Mrs. James Strong conceived of a Dresden Quadrille: the ladies, in her choreographic effort, confined themselves in navy blue satin dresses, with "bouffant paniers," short sleeves, and low bodices; the gentlemen, in white satin breeches *de rigueur* at the German court.<sup>22</sup>

When Lander struck up the *Ticklish Waiter* Polka, many guests may have decided, despite the continuing music, to sample at that moment the dry champagnes of the palace cellars. In the second-story supper room, the party-goers could chatter over the absence of Jay Gould. Number 350 Fifth Avenue had never countenanced the orchid cultivator; now 660 barred him too. Thus the House of Vanderbilt revenged Erie.

The newspapers of New York City did not underrate

Alva's achievement in placing her family. In the opinion of the *Herald*, "The shifting gleams of gorgeous color and of quaint and curious outlines in a thousand costumes flitting through the rooms—themselves a study fit for an artist—made up a scene probably never rivalled in Republican America and never outdone by the gayest court of Europe."<sup>23</sup> In the judgment of the *Sun*, "Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt's Ball was gorgeously accomplished with no interruption by dynamite. In lavishness of expenditure and brilliancy of dress, it far outdid any ball ever given before in this city. It was a scene from Faëry Land, Mother Goose, the Picture Galleries, the Courts and Camps of Europe, Audubon's Birds of America, Heathen Myths and Christian Legends, and even from Mr. Diedrich Knickerbocker's invaluable notes on the fashions in New York a long time ago. All the revelry of color involved in such a catalogue moved gleaming in a garden of flowers under bright lights to soft music from hidden instruments. It is only at a Fancy Dress Ball that men can make themselves really picturesque—and qualified voters, grave and gay, vied in artistic quality and cost as well with the lovely women who adorned the evening."<sup>24</sup>

One journal calculated the expense of the fête. "I made over one hundred fifty of the dresses worn at the ball," Lanouette, the prince of costumers, told a reporter for the *World*, "and was compelled to refuse many orders on account of my inability to complete them. I had one hundred forty dressmakers and seamstresses at work night and day for the past five weeks. Many of my dresses," he computed, "cost between five and seven hundred dollars. I don't see how you can make a full estimate of the cost of all the costumes,

for to my knowledge, many ladies had their gowns made at home either by their own seamstresses or by dressmakers hired for the occasion. At any rate, thirty thousand dollars for the dresses made by me is rather below than above the mark.”<sup>25</sup>

“I have decorated the houses of princes and ambassadors”—Klunder dwelt on his fame at Paris in the Second Empire—“but never have I seen floral embellishments on a scale of such regal grandeur. Mr. Vanderbilt gave me *carte blanche*.”

The *World* consulted other costumers, other florists, stable owners and hairdressers, and then decided that the Ball involved these expenditures:

Costumes	\$155,730.00
Flowers	11,000.00
Carriage Hire	4,000.00
Hairdressing	4,000.00
Champagne, Catering, Music, and other items	65,270.00
Total	<hr/> \$250,000.00

Henry Clews, as a guest, did not care to itemize the party. “The ball,” that banker reflected, “seemed to have the effect of levelling up among the social ranks of uppertendom, and placing the Vanderbilts at the top of the heap in what is recognized as good society in New York. So far as cost, richness of costume and newspaper celebrity were concerned, that ball had, perhaps, no equal in history. It may not have been quite so expensive as the feast of Alexander the Great at Babylon, some of the entertainments of Cleopatra to Augustus and Mark Antony, or a few of the magnificent banquets of Louis XIV, but when viewed from every essential stand-



point, and taking into account our advanced civilization, I have no hesitation in saying that the Vanderbilt ball was superior to any of those grand historic displays of festivity and amusement.”<sup>26</sup>

The Vanderbilts now attempted the ultimate clubs. In May 1883, Willie K. invited the members of the Coaching Club to visit his villa, “Idle Hour,” at Oakdale, Long Island. He did not belong at that time to the society, but he was obviously able to entertain the whips: he had just been appointed Board Chairman of the Lake Shore system. To be sure, Vanderbilt did not yacht at “Idle Hour”; he ran the tiny sidewheeler “Mosquito” on the shallow Great River merely to amuse his friends. However, he stocked his 800 acres with quail, raised ribbon-winning cattle, and maintained a retinue of maroon-clad servants in the mansion, teahouse, and stables which Richard Hunt designed. The Club accepted.

It was in 1873 that William Jay and Thomas Newbold discovered, during a stroll down Fifth Avenue, that the windows of Brewster and Company were exhibiting an English coach. They noted the drag, which T. Bigelow Lawrence had tooled in Boston in the 'sixties, and two years later formed the Coaching Club to impose the sport on New York. Other charter members were: James Gordon Bennett II, Frederic Bronson, William P. Douglas, Leonard W. Jerome, De Lancey Astor Kane, S. Nicholson Kane, and A. Thorndike Rice. Later, J. Roosevelt Roosevelt, James J. Van Alen, August Belmont II, and Perry Belmont joined. On April 22, 1876, two ladies and two *tigers* in the English style clambered behind Colonel Jay on his coach, which stood in front of the Union League. The Colonel, in a bottle-green coat and

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

high silk hat, thrust a nosegay in his buttonhole and initiated the annual spring and autumn meets. Bennett, on a French drag, led the other equipages which followed Jay up the Avenue to Central Park.

By the time they booked passage on the "Mosquito," the coachmen no longer met in the fall, but they gathered, on the last Saturday in May, outside the Brunswick Hotel, for a Spring Parade which actually distinguished Fifth Avenue. Delicately they hesitated eleven months at admitting the master of "Idle Hour" to membership. Finally, in April 1884, they entitled Vanderbilt to dignify the yellow body and red undercarriage of his coach with the C's of the club emblem.<sup>27</sup> Other committees on admission could acknowledge, frankly, what the party accomplished. The Metropolitan, Knickerbocker, Union, Racquet and Tennis, Turf and Field, and New York Yacht Clubs could welcome Willie K.

In the fall of 1883, the Vanderbilts consolidated their gains by opening the new Metropolitan Opera House. Until then, the Academy of Music, erected in 1853 on Irving Place at Fourteenth Street, had satisfied the operatic enthusiasm of the city. However, the Bayards, the Beekmans, the Schuylers, the Livingstons, and the other aristocrats who filled the loges of that theater refused to recognize the demands of the "new people." Testily, they turned down offers of \$30,000 for a box. Irritated, the recent fortunes of Manhattan decided on an Opera House of their own. They rejected August Belmont's compromise of adding twenty-six more boxes to the Academy, and on April 28, 1880, founded the Metropolitan Opera Company. At first, the outsiders considered building on Vanderbilt Avenue at Forty-third Street. Then they deter-





*(Photos Brown Brothers)*

THREE OF THE VANDERBILT VILLAS—  
BILTMORE, THE BREAKERS, AND MARBLE HOUSE





*(Photos Brown Brothers)*

CONSUELO: BEFORE AND AFTER BECOMING A DUCHESS



mined on the present location on Broadway between Thirty-ninth and Fortieth Streets. On that \$600,000 site, they commissioned J. Cleveland Cady to design a \$430,000 auditorium. Darius O. Mills, Jay Gould, Henry Clews, and other capitalists subscribed, but the Vanderbilts easily dominated the enterprise. They assumed 750 of the 10,500 shares authorized, and thus acquired five boxes. According to Irving Kolodin, the historian of the Metropolitan, William Henry signed for 300 shares, Willie K. for 300, and Cornelius II for 150.<sup>28</sup>

On the opening night, October 22, 1883, such millionaires as Adrian Iselin, George F. Baker, Ogden Goelet, William C. Whitney, Joseph W. Drexel, and J. Pierpont Morgan joined the Goulds and the Vanderbilts on Thirty-ninth Street and listened to Christine Nilsson play the role of Marguerite in *Faust*. Cautiously, Mrs. Paran Stevens attended both the Metropolitan and the rival Academy on that evening.

The critic of the New York *Dramatic Mirror* was less circumspect. "There was a big crowd Monday night at the new Metropolitan Opera House," he conceded. "All the *nouveaux riches* were on hand. The Goulds and Vanderbilts and people of that ilk perfumed the air with the odor of crisp greenbacks. The tiers of boxes looked like cages in a menagerie of monopolists. When somebody remarked that the house looked *as bright as a new dollar*, the appropriate character of the assemblage became apparent. To a refined eye, the decorations of the edifice seemed in extremely bad taste."

On the other hand, the stockholders of the Academy "as though alive to the fact that a demonstration was being made at another house uptown by the codfish aristocracy, turned

out *en masse* and together with a vast number of people who wished, by their presence, to show their willingness to support an opera season backed by something more than the money bags of indiscreet speculation, filled the house from top to bottom. The adherents of Mapleson"—the *Mirror* alluded to the impresario of the Fourteenth Street stage—"are the people who constitute New York society. The majority of them are neither vulgarians nor parvenus. They are distinguished by their brilliant social altitude and by the identification of their names with Manhattan's history." <sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding, two years later, Colonel Mapleson disbanded the troupe he had organized for the Academy. "Let royal coffers be what they may"—a fastidious clergyman appraised the gems of the Metropolitan boxholders—"the collective contents of the jewel caskets of the ultra-fashionable set in New York society approximate closely one hundred seventy millions of dollars. White ropes of Oriental pearls of almost priceless purity enchain the necks and shoulders of the smartest set; the coronets of diamonds worn at the Opera cost, on the average, not more than twenty thousand dollars. Of a few of the more imposing tiaras, however, each of the pearl-shaped brilliants capping the apex could easily command five thousand dollars. If a woman aspires to regal effects in evening dress, besides her diamond tiara, a corsage piece of diamonds valued at, say, seventy-five thousand dollars is requisite." <sup>30</sup>

And on the evening of January 21, 1884, Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt attended the Annual Ball at the home of Mrs. William Astor, 350 Fifth Avenue.



II

“Newport was now at its best.” In 1853, Ward McAllister spent his first summer at the Rhode Island resort. “The most charming people of the country,” he later recollected, “had formed a select little community there; the society was small, and all were included in the gaieties and festivities. Those were the days that made Newport what it was then and is now, the most enjoyable and luxurious little island in America. The farmers of the island even seemed to catch the infection, and they were as much interested in the success of our picnics and country dinners, as we were ourselves. They threw open their houses to us, and never heeded the invasion, on a bright sunshiny day, of a party of fifty people, who took possession of their dining room, in fact, of their whole house, and frolicked in it to their heart’s content. To be sure, I had often to pacify a farmer when a liveried groom robbed his hen roost, but as he knew that this fashionable horde paid their way, he was easily soothed. I always then remarked that in Newport, at that time, you could have driven a four-in-hand of camels or giraffes, and the residents of the island would have smiled and found it quite the thing. The charm of the place then was the simple way of entertaining; there were no large balls; all the dancing and dining was done by daylight, and in the country. I did not hesitate to ask the very *crème de la crème* of New York society to lunch

and dine at my farm, or to a fishing party on the rocks.

"These little parties were then," McAllister emphasized, "and are now, the stepping stones to our best New York society. Now, do not for a moment imagine that all were indiscriminately asked to these little fêtes. On the contrary, if you were not of the inner circle, and were a new-comer, it took the combined efforts of all your friends' backing and pushing to procure an invitation for you. For years, whole families sat on the stool of probation, awaiting trial and acceptance, and many were rejected, but once received, you were put on an intimate footing with all. To acquire such intimacy in a great city like New York would have taken you a lifetime."

Indisputably, Ward McAllister made Newport *de rigueur*. "Your pace is charming"—a friend complimented the swell—"but can you keep it up?"<sup>1</sup>

In the days before the Savannah dandy occupied the island, a grandee from Charleston, John Julius Pringle, along with those gentlemen of leisure from New York, De Lancey Kane and Henry de Rham, set the stately tempo of the resort. Now, the Vanderbilts, flushed with their triumph over the Astors, quickened McAllister's rhythm.

When Willie K. descended upon Newport, H. H. Richardson had already designed spacious manors for F. W. Andrews and for William Watts Sherman. However, Vanderbilt did not discover in those estates the grandeur he demanded in a villa. Rather, he approved the gorgeous late Gothic "Ochre Court" which Richard Hunt completed for Ogden Goelet in 1891. In the following year, he asked the fashionable architect to create a birthday gift for Alva which

should shame the château of the real-estate millionaire. Delighted, Hunt drew the plans for "Marble House" which he finished in 1895. Until this time, the summer homes at the resort had been innocently named cottages. Mrs. Vanderbilt's new residence lent a certain irony to the term. Her husband spent \$9,000,000 on the interiors of her \$2,000,000 palace.<sup>2</sup>

"Marble House," glistening in white Italian marble, resplendent with glacial Corinthian columns, paralyzed Newport but did not please Henry James. He found such villas "white elephants—all cry and no wool, all house and no garden." The expatriate novelist wrote: "What an idea, originally, to have seen this miniature spot of earth, where the sea nymphs on the curved sands at the worst might have chanted back to the shepherds, as a mere breeding ground for white elephants! They look queer and conscious and lumpish—some of them, as with an air of the brandished proboscis, really grotesque—while their averted owners, roused from a witless dream, wonder what in the world is to be done with them. The answer to which, I think, can only be that there is absolutely nothing to be done; nothing but to let them stand there, always, vast and blank, for reminder to those concerned of the prohibited degrees of witlessness, and of the peculiarly awkward vengeance of proportion and discretion."<sup>3</sup>

No such premonition deterred Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II from building, in the vicinity of Marble House, a rival palace by Hunt: "The Breakers." The unkind, who noticed that this Mrs. Vanderbilt had ordered a château in New York to compete with 660 Fifth Avenue, whispered rumors of discord between the two branches of the House.



Alva, it is true, looked on society as an adventure in elegance, while her sister-in-law Alice viewed the elegant world as a haven. Of the two brothers, Willie K. was easily the more *seigneur*, for on his honeymoon at Saratoga, he signed the register of the United States Hotel: "William K. Vanderbilt, wife, two maids, two dogs and fifteen horses." <sup>4</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt could not disdain Saratoga. During the season, they would occupy a cottage in that wing of "United States" which faced the dining hall. And they would lunch, before attending the races, at a conspicuous table. But Willie K. obviously preferred, to the verandas of the spa, the decks of his yachts.

On the morning of October 14, 1886, Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, other Vanderbilts, and the inevitable Depew arrived at Wilmington, Delaware, on board a private Wagner palace car of the New York Central System. At the docks of the Harlan and Hollingsworth yards, Mrs. W. K.'s sister Mrs. Fernando Yznaga christened a 285-foot steam yacht, the "Alva." "Mrs. Vanderbilt, who is very generally accredited to be a lady of excellent taste"—*The New York Times* scampered to compliment the mistress of the personal liner—"deems that elaborate and ornate furnishing are out of place on a yacht. She thinks that she is rich enough to afford simplicity in this instance, and that is what she is going to have, in a comparative sense." Saint Clare Byrne designed and J. Frederick Tams supervised this reincarnation of the "North Star." She cost \$500,000. Jay Gould's "Atalanta" measured but 250 feet overall; William Astor's "Nourmahal" but 233 feet; James Gordon Bennett's "Namouna" but 226 feet. The "Alva" was the largest yacht in the world. <sup>5</sup>

## ENTERS SOCIETY

Her owner, when she sank six years later in a collision off Vineyard Sound, received less than \$100,000 damages, but he immediately commissioned Saint Clare Byrne to design a full-rigged sail and steam craft to fly, in her stead, his black and white pennant. In the following May, at Laird's Shipyard, Birkenhead, Lady Alva Montagu, daughter of the former Consuelo Yznaga, named this new pleasure craft the "Valiant." Three hundred twelve graceful feet long, she was capable of crossing the Atlantic in seven days.<sup>6</sup>

Now, in November 1893, the "Valiant," manned by a crew of seventy-two and a wise French chef, steamed down the Hudson bound for Gibraltar, Bombay, and Nice. If Willie K. and Alva invited few friends to accompany them on this voyage to India, they did include Winthrop Rutherford, a well-born attorney whom their daughter Consuelo fancied, and Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont, son of the first August Belmont. In such company, the Vanderbilts could not hesitate at \$10,000, the monthly upkeep of the "Valiant."<sup>7</sup>

Strangely, no sooner did the superb yacht touch Bombay, than Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt returned hurriedly to Paris. For an interval, both Willie K. and Alva stopped at the Hotel Bristol in that capital. Then she left, alone, for London. In those times abroad, whenever the fashionable discussed Americans, they pitied the unhappy Bostonian Edward Parker Deacon, who slew in his wife's bedroom a Frenchman who pretended to her affections. Now, turfmen at Deauville, while wagering on the entries of Achille Fould, appraised the rumor that Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt were separating. In Paris, the elegant repeated the tale that



Cornelius II had traveled to France in a vain effort to reconcile his brother and Alva.

The newspapers insinuated that Willie K. had been paying too many attentions to a lady in Parisian society, that he had carelessly offered her the 40,000 francs he won by betting on the Grand Prix de Paris, and that he had installed in her *hôtel* domestics who wore the maroon livery of the House of Vanderbilt. Toward the close of December 1894, he returned to the United States on the S.S. "Teutonic." In New York he lived, not at 660 Fifth Avenue, but in a costly suite at the Metropolitan Club, where he denied reporters the satisfaction of an interview.<sup>8</sup>

On March 5, 1895, Judge Barrett of the Supreme Court of New York granted the divorce which Alva demanded. She named as correspondent Nellie Neustretter, a native of Eureka, Nevada, who had wandered to Paris after marrying a cigar drummer in San Francisco. A gentleman, Willie K. never questioned his former wife's allegations. Meanwhile, the American press made much of the severance of the Vanderbilts. "The capture of the purse and affections of Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt which led up to this distressing legal action is a story of the hunting of big American game on the sunlit shores of the Mediterranean," the New York *World* claimed. "For years, the male members of the Vanderbilt family have been appearing occasionally at Monte Carlo, and for years they have been the despair of the gambling adventuresses of European capitals. The most notorious women in Europe have studied the Vanderbilts anxiously. Their wealth, large and tempting as it really is, has been multiplied beyond Croesus' wildest dreams by the imaginations of Monte Carlo.



## ENTERS SOCIETY

Six or seven years ago, when W. K. Vanderbilt sat quietly at the roulette tables, leaving much embarrassed when any woman stared at him, he was the despair of all the European hunters of rich Americans. Only last winter, a young person of Paris who calls herself Liane de Poujy, and whose pearls are discussed by Paris newspapers as the pearls of respectable women are discussed here, was taken ill twice at dinner. She was eating with a female companion in the outer room of the Grand Hôtel restaurant, and very near her W. K. Vanderbilt was dining with some friends. That young woman, with visions of such an establishment as none of her rivals ever possessed, was made ill by sheer mental agitation."

Alva secured an annual income of \$100,000, "Marble House," and the sole custody of her three children. The *World* recognized that she had expanded the Vanderbilt legend. "Until Mrs. W. K.'s advent, the family was unheard of in New York society, except occasionally when it was abused for watering stock or damning the public. Mrs. W. K. thought that better things could be done with their opportunities. She took Willie K. by the hand and led the way for all the Vanderbilts into the gay world of Society, Fifth Avenue, terrapin, Newport, dry champagne, servants in livery, men who don't work, women with no serious thoughts, and all the other charms of fashionable existence." <sup>9</sup>

"I always do everything first," Alva admitted afterward. "I blaze the trail for the rest to walk in. I was the first girl of my set to marry a Vanderbilt." <sup>10</sup>

## III

"I sought everywhere for assistance," Charles Francis Adams II narrated his struggle to save the Union Pacific from Jay Gould. "I told the Vanderbilts they could have the property, the control of it, for practically a few millions of floating debt. They replied that it was more and more a settled policy that they would not move their management or interests west of Chicago." <sup>1</sup>

In those comfortable words, the grandchildren of the Commodore declined the opportunity to dominate, through the Union Pacific, a transcontinental system. Seven years later, in 1897, they did nothing to prevent Edward Henry Harri-  
man, who realized the potentialities of the route, from purchasing the line they had disdained. Nominally, Cornelius Vanderbilt II and William Kissam Vanderbilt were Chairmen of the Boards, respectively, of the New York Central and Lake Shore Railroads. Actually, they played passive roles in railroading, and intrusted their inheritance to Chauncey M. Depew. That retainer held the Presidency of the Central from 1885 to 1898.

If Depew managed capably, rather than brilliantly, the Vanderbilt roads, he did second, to his credit, J. P. Morgan's policy of harmony among the trunk lines. Yet he cherished, it would seem, gastronomic as much as railway peace. After dinner at Delmonico's, he was wont to warm the hearts of

solid men with speeches suited to superior brandy and cigars. In time, he entered the Senate, where he represented New York State for two terms. "Mr. Depew"—Thomas W. Lamont reviewed the Senator's career—"was an institution, and he will become a tradition." Oswald Garrison Villard was not happy at that prospect. The liberal editor wrote: "Possibly no man in American life did more to debase the politics of his state than Chauncey Depew during his long service as political manager of the New York Central Railroad." <sup>2</sup>

In 1892, the Vanderbilts gladly furthered Drexel, Morgan and Company's ideal of concord among the anthracite railroads by making a minor commitment in the shares of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company; in the following year, they purchased 15 per cent of the stock of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad. However, it is possible that they found more satisfaction in founding, with other capitalists, the Metropolitan Opera and Real Estate Company which replaced the earlier box-holding corporation after a conflagration in the theater in the summer of 1892. Cornelius II and W. K. Vanderbilt joined John Jacob Astor IV, George F. Baker, D. O. Mills, Robert and Ogden Goelet, Henry Clews, and J. P. Morgan in forbidding the transfer of certificates in the enterprise except to persons approved by the directorate. The aging Jay Gould did not participate in this operatic investment. Already tubercular, he died in December, worth \$84,309,258. <sup>3</sup>

Perhaps only one railway holding held the attention of William Henry's heirs: the 125-mile bituminous coal road, the Beech Creek. In 1890, they induced the New York Central to lease the property for 999 years at an annual rental



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

of 4 per cent on \$5,000,000 capital stock and 4 per cent on \$5,000,000 in bonds. Two years later, the happy Vanderbilts obtained an additional satisfaction from the tiny railroad: \$1,000,000 more in capital stock paying 4 per cent and \$1,000,000 in second mortgage bonds paying 5 per cent.

Not long after the grandchildren of the Commodore secured that attractive lease, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt spent the season in Paris with her daughter Consuelo. There, she attended the receptions which the Duc and Duchesse de Gramont gave in the ballroom of their *hôtel*, rue de Chaillot. At the home of the de Gramonts, Anna, the daughter of Jay Gould, waltzed with the ultimate dandy Boni de Castellane. Consuelo may have spoken to the industrialist Eugène Schneider. Alva, however, frowned on the cotillon partners her daughter found in that *hôtel*. She did not destine Consuelo to marry in France.<sup>4</sup>

On the evening of August 28, 1895, Mrs. Vanderbilt, at "Marble House," presented her daughter to society. "The grounds," if we are to believe the New York *Herald*, "were just as they used to be at Versailles, when Louis strolled across the broad terrace with his court." Files of powdered footmen easily inflamed the imagination of reporters.<sup>5</sup> Strangely, no newsman appreciated the full significance of the presence at the fête of His Grace the Ninth Duke of Marlborough. And yet "Blenheim," his residence near Oxford, could compete in magnificence with Alva's \$11,000,000 cottage.

It has been observed that there are only two palaces in England: Buckingham and Blenheim. His Grace passed a fortnight at Newport. At the end of that interval, Mrs. W. K.

Vanderbilt announced the engagement of Consuelo. The House of Gould, it must be admitted, had stolen a momentary march in these matters. Anna, a few months before, had adopted through marriage the title of Comtesse de Castellane.<sup>6</sup>

At length, on the morning of November 6, fifty-five policemen surrounded the town house of Alva Vanderbilt at 24 East Seventy-second Street. Those officers thrust back the crowds which massed on Madison Avenue at the approach of the bridal carriage. For a moment, the populace gazed on the coachman and the tiger as they waited, immaculate in their maroon livery, atop the coach. Then Consuelo entered, the Vanderbilt domestics adjusted the chrysanthemums of their buttonholes, and the drag turned toward Central Park and Fifth Avenue.

A police guard of 200 checked, near Saint Thomas' Church, the thousands who congested Fifth Avenue from Fifty-first to Fifty-seventh Street. The mob analyzed the features of those who gained admittance, and realized that Alva had rebuffed the relatives of Willie K. for defending him at the time of their divorce. Save for the brothers, father and grandmother of the bride, no one who bore the name of Vanderbilt had received an invitation to the ceremony.

Within, Dr. George William Warren at the organ played a chorus and fugue from Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*, Schubert's "Ave Maria" and Battista's "Offertory in C." Afterward, at eleven-thirty, Dr. Walter Damrosch led a symphony orchestra in the "Overture to Leonore No. 3," and in selections from *Die Meistersinger*. Meanwhile Alva seated her intimate friends about her in the middle aisle. Now,



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Damrosch lifted his baton to begin the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*; however, W. K. Vanderbilt, the Duke of Marlborough, and the British Ambassador hesitated in the rear of the church. And the conductor, to his embarrassment, stood fully twenty minutes in readiness before the sexton waved, with a white handkerchief, that Consuelo was coming.

Finally, at twelve-fifteen, the bridesmaids of the heiress, in gowns of white satin girdled with sky-blue ribbon, in royal blue velvet hats, and with bouquets of bride roses and lilies of the valley, strode down the aisle. Consuelo, in a gown of cream-white satin with a full court train which fell, delicious with embroidery, from her shoulder, followed those young girls. Past pews glutted with costly roses, she carried a cluster of orchids, lilies of the valley, and cattleya ferns raised in the conservatories of Blenheim Palace. The great-granddaughter of the Commodore had freshened her bodice with orange blossoms, but no flowers, however exquisite, could conceal an anxiety which troubled her bosom as she drew near the altar.

Once Bishop Potter pronounced the benediction, Willie K. withdrew to a side room, where he signed the contract the House of Marlborough requested. Afterward, he parted from his daughter, who left with her husband for the wedding breakfast at 24 East Seventy-second Street. There, Alva glowed in the reception room which she congested with orchids. There, she exhibited her gift to Consuelo: the pearls of the Empress Catherine of Russia.

That evening, the newlyweds retired to "Idle Hour," where they passed their honeymoon.<sup>7</sup> On the morning after the nuptial night, the clerks in the treasury of the New York



Central may have grasped one reason for the inflation, three years before, of the capital structure of the Beech Creek Railway.<sup>8</sup> Under the terms of an agreement signed November 6, 1895, they began transferring Beech Creek shares to new names. The contract read, in part:

“ . . . Between the Most Noble Charles Richard John, Duke of Marlborough, of Blenheim Palace, in the County of Oxford, England, party of the first part, and William Kissam Vanderbilt, of Oakland, in the county of Suffolk, N. Y., Esq., of the second part, Consuelo Vanderbilt, party of the third part, and Mr. Vanderbilt, their trustees, of the fourth part. Whereas, a marriage is intended between the said Duke of Marlborough and the said Consuelo Vanderbilt, and whereas pursuant to an agreement made upon the treaty for the said intended marriage, the sum of two million five hundred thousand dollars in fifty thousand shares of the Beech Creek Railway Company, on which an annual payment of four per cent is guaranteed by the New York Central Railroad Company, is transferred this day to the trustees. And shall, during the joint lives of the said Duke of Marlborough, Consuelo Vanderbilt, pay the income of the said sum of two million five hundred thousand dollars, unto the Duke of Marlborough for his life, and after the death of the said Duke of Marlborough, shall pay the income of the said trust fund unto the said Consuelo Vanderbilt for life. . . .” Another agreement provided, pleasantly, that W. K. Vanderbilt should pay one hundred thousand dollars a year to both the Duke and the Duchess.

The Beech Creek shares had doubtless been duly transferred and registered in the name of the nuptial trustees

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when Alva, on the 11th of January, 1896, wedded Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont, whose marriage to Sarah Whitney had been recently dissolved. Since the Protestant Episcopal Church could not unite the two divorcés, Mayor Strong performed the civil ceremony at 24 East Seventy-second Street. Shortly after noon, the newlyweds entered Alva's carriage (her coachmen still wore the livery of the House) and drove to the Grand Central Depot, where they boarded a train for Newport. Cornelius and W. K. Vanderbilt, closeted in the railroad offices above the Station, expressed relief that the wedding had taken place without display.<sup>9</sup>

In London, the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, thanks to a new generosity of Willie K., began building "Sunderland House," a \$2,500,000 town house. Meanwhile, it is safe to assert that they devoted the Beech Creek dividends to the upkeep of the villa which Sir John Van Brugh designed for the first Duke. Alexander Pope betrayed an unusual understanding of real-estate problems when he wrote of the architect of Blenheim:

Lie heavy on him, earth, for he  
Laid many a heavy load on thee.

## IV

"I am not vain enough to believe that New York will not be able to get along without me," Mrs. William Astor allowed in the year of her death. "Many women will rise up

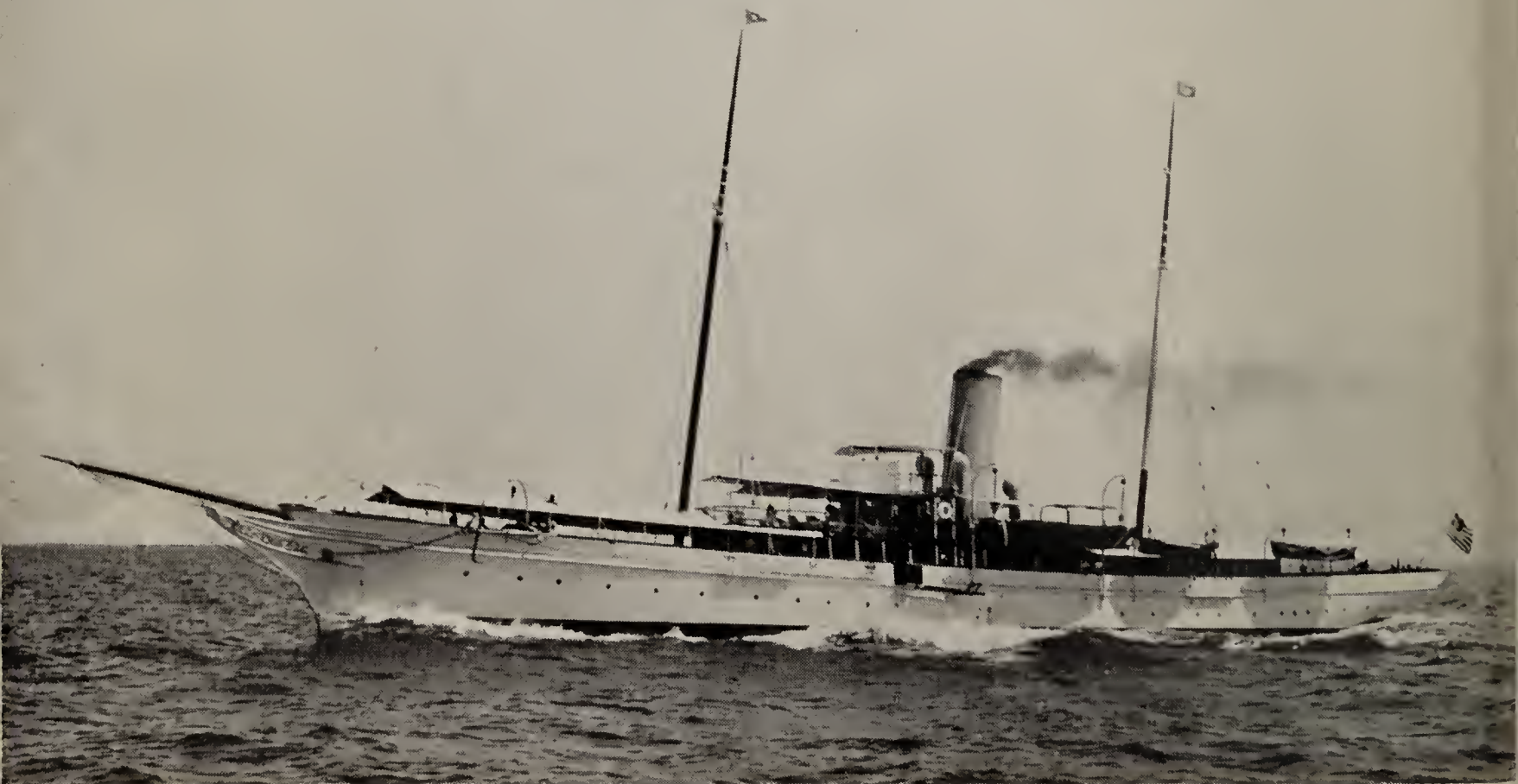




*(Photos Morris Rosenfeld)*

*Above: THE "VALIANT" OF THE FIRST W. K. VANDERBILT. Below:  
THE "ALVA" OF THE SECOND W. K. VANDERBILT*





*(Photos Brown Brothers  
and Morris Rosenfeld)*

*Above:* MRS. CORNELIUS VANDERBILT II WITH HER DAUGHTER COUN-  
TESS LÁSZLÓ SZÉCHÉNYI. *Below:* THE "NORTH STAR" OF HER SON  
CORNELIUS VANDERBILT III



to fill my place. But I hope that my influence will be felt in one thing, and that is, in discountenancing the undignified methods employed by certain New York women to attract a following. They have given entertainments that belonged under a circus tent rather than in a gentlewoman's house."<sup>1</sup> Unmistakably, the methods which the great lady opposed were the notorious parties of Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish. Mrs. Astor realized that dinners in honor of monkeys—Mrs. Fish had asked Newport to meet an ape—could dissolve Society. Elegance, indeed, as the nineteenth century ended, was no longer strict. Ward McAllister, by publishing his memoirs, had fallen from grace. His successor, the puckish Harry Lehr, waited on the Queen in her new home, a palace by Hunt at Fifth Avenue and Sixty-fifth Street, but often scampered to the Fish residence on upper Madison Avenue. Thus, even a chamberlain no longer acknowledged the absolute sovereignty of the House of Astor.

In those times, two *affaires de luxe* threatened to dim the remembrance of the Vanderbilt Ball. Early in 1897, Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin announced that they would improve the condition of the needy by giving a Fancy Dress Fête in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, even though Dr. Rainsford, the rector of Saint George's Church, questioned their contention that dollars spent on costumes would aid the indigent. "This affair," the preacher told reporters, "will draw attention to the growing gulf which separates the rich and the poor, and serve to increase the discontent of the latter needlessly. It is hardly to the point to talk of setting money into circulation." Boldly, the Bradley Martins took issue with the divine whom J. P. Morgan favored, and set \$369,200 into circulation on

the night of February the 6th. Sadly, the party-givers discovered shortly afterward that the tax collectors of the City of New York wished to reappraise their home. The Bradley Martins glanced at the new assessments on their property, and then withdrew from the United States to live in England.<sup>2</sup> Eight years later, the exquisite clubman James Hazen Hyde, who had fallen heir to the Equitable Life Assurance Society, honored his niece Annah Ripley with an ingenuous *souper*. At a cost of \$200,000, he turned Sherry's Upper Ballroom into a scene from the Gardens at Versailles, while he transformed the other Assembly Room into a theater worthy of the troupe of actors, led by Réjane, whom he imported from Paris for the evening. Stanford White and Whitney Warren aided the millionaire in decorating the café, but the State of New York, which investigated the tangled affairs of the insurance company in the wake of the fête, never complimented Hyde on the splendor of the *soirée*. At the end of the inquest, the dandy sailed for France on the "Lorraine." He now understood, as did the Bradley Martins, that America no longer tolerated entertainments on the scale of the Vanderbilt Ball. Disappointed, he established his permanent residence at Versailles.<sup>3</sup>

Willie K., while those capitalists were enduring banishment for their superb affairs, was devoting an unusual attention to his holdings. In 1898, he authorized the merger of the Lake Shore with the New York Central, and so sanctioned the idea of bringing other roads in which the House had heavy commitments, with the exception of the Lackawanna and the North Western, within the corporate structure of the Central. In the next year, he passed on the lease of the



Boston and Albany, which provided the family property with an excellent entrance into New England. And he witnessed the consolidation of the Wagner and Pullman companies. Finally, from 1900 to 1905 he seconded J. P. Morgan's policy of a gentlemen's agreement between the New York Central and the Pennsylvania.

Willie K. consecrated some of the dividends he received from Central in those years to the rebuilding of "Idle Hour." Early in 1899, flames had devastated the villa, sparing only the pagoda, the conservatories, the coach house, and the stables. The millionaire seldom opened the estate for other ends than honeymoons—his son W. K. Vanderbilt II was with his bride at Oakdale at the time the fire broke out—but he delighted in demanding a new manor. He commissioned Richard Howland Hunt, son of the original designer, and the firm of Warren and Wetmore to design a 110-room house, with 45 bathrooms, and a garage ready for 100 motor cars. When the architects and contractors had finished, "Idle Hour" represented an investment of \$6,000,000.<sup>4</sup>

However, Vanderbilt lavished most of his income in that era not on fêtes, on châteaux or on yachts, but on the turf. In 1896, upon the death of his mother, who frowned on the notoriety of the race course, he gratified an important desire and registered his colors: white with a black hoop on the sleeve, and a black cap. In that season, he raced, although not brilliantly, in the United States. Then, far from downcast by his disappointing venture in two-year-olds by Ornament, he decided to group a string in France. Happily, before challenging the Rothschild entries which were ever successful at Saint Cloud, he purchased the training stable of

Camille Blanc at Saint Louis de Poissy. The acquisition included thirteen yearlings and a 2900-meter double track. In addition, Willie K. hired Rutgers Leroy as manager. Then, after importing a staff of American trainers, jockeys, and stablehands, he was ready to beset French racing.<sup>5</sup>

Paris, in that epoch, summoned Vanderbilt. The Russian princes who wintered at Nice did not fail to linger in the capital before returning to Saint Petersburg. Boni de Castellane, who was spending \$5,500,000 of Anna Gould's fortune in eleven years, was giving superb dinners in his *hôtel*, rue Malakoff. He insisted on a retinue of thirty powdered *valets de pied* whom he clad in cinnamon livery. "We have dined in an aquarium; we have been waited on by red fish—" his aunt the old Comtesse Beaulaincourt thanked him for a *souper*. At the Café Anglais, Comte Louis de Turenne would advise the chef of the delicacies he demanded for the friends who shared his *cabinet particulier*. On the Champs-Élysées, and in the Bois, the wealthier clubmen would display their motor cars, their Serpolets à vapeur, their electric Kriegers. And Wales, who won at Ascot with Persimmon in the year that Vanderbilt registered his colors, would plan a Parisian week-end to satisfy a whim.

In New York, Chauncey M. Depew, who succeeded Cornelius II as Chairman of the Board of the New York Central, decided the railway policies which Willie K. approved on his business trips to the States. Vanderbilt, whenever he crossed the ocean to consult Depew, could not neglect opportunities to improve his stable. In 1901, for example, he purchased, from Julius and Max Fleischmann, twelve brood mares with foal to Halma; from Hal Bradley, sixteen brood mares and

yearlings. Meantime, he noted that finishes were vindicating such selections. In the next year, his colors earned over \$53,000.<sup>6</sup>

On the 25th of April, 1903, Willie K. wed at Saint Mark's Church, North Audley Street, London, Mrs. Lewis Rutherford, who had been Anne, daughter of Oliver Harriman, before she married her first husband Samuel Sands. Her second consort's brother-in-law, Henry White, then Secretary of our Embassy at the Court of Saint James, gave her away in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, but the Bishop of London protested the religious ceremony which united her to the divorced millionaire. Two days afterward, at Saint Cloud, the Vanderbilt silks rebuked the prelate. Biltmore gained the Prix Bataille; Marigold, the Prix Soleil.<sup>7</sup>

At Chantilly, on the afternoon of May 27, 1906, the turfmen of Paris and their ladies gathered, despite the dreary sky which forbade fresh toilettes, for the race of the year: the 110,000 franc Prix du Jockey Club, or Derby. Clubmen who wagered on Fella and Querido because Woodland, not Bellhouse, was riding the Vanderbilt entry, Maintenon, underestimated, foolishly, the ability of Willie K.'s trainer Duke. Maintenon, by a half length, won the sacred event for three-year-olds. That season, the Vanderbilt stables grossed altogether \$123,000.<sup>8</sup>

The Rothschilds were quick to envy such success. The sportsmen-bankers hired, in their turn, American hands to ride and train their entries. Notwithstanding, Willie K. won in 1908, and again in 1909, the Prix du Jockey Club. Maurice de Rothschild, in the latter year, earned but 763,477



francs, while W. K. Vanderbilt, with 1,153,194 francs, led the winners on the French turf.<sup>9</sup>

In the next four seasons, the expatriate capitalist did not obtain the Derby. Yet, on inspecting the winnings of his colors, he may have known a deep delight. Prestige is said to have won, all told, \$70,000; Northeast, \$96,000; Sea Sick, \$125,000; Oversight, \$125,000. Exhilarated, possibly, by those profits, Willie K. now acquired the superlative string of the late James R. Keene. And just south of Deauville, he purchased Le Quesnay, a ruined château in the style of Chenonceaux. After repairing the decayed manor, he began a breeding farm near by, with box stalls for 130 horses. In these times, the grandson of the Commodore rarely returned to America. To be near his stud, he occupied an *hôtel particulier* in Paris at 10, rue Leroux.<sup>10</sup>

In his anxiety for his entries, W. K. Vanderbilt may have reminded French sportsmen of the Anglomaniac Duc de Lauzun, who raced in the reign of Louis XV. A recent historian of the Paris tracks understood that Willie K. was in earnest, for he wrote: "We will always remember that model stable where nothing was missing, not even the soul, and where everything went off like clockwork. We will always remember that serious face, much more like a doctor's or a clergyman's than a banker's [sic]." Valery Larbaud, the first French novelist haunted by millionaires and luxury trains, was careful to mention *Vanderkilt* horses with the proper awe.<sup>11</sup>

Withal, Willie K. did not succeed in escaping terrible boredom. On one voyage to the United States, he explained his ennui to reporters. "My life was never destined to be

quite happy," he complained. "It was laid out along lines which I could not foresee, almost from earliest childhood. It has left me with nothing to hope for, with nothing definite to seek or strive for. Inherited wealth is a real handicap to happiness. It is as certain death to ambition as cocaine is to morality.

"If a man makes money, no matter how much, he finds a certain happiness in its possession, for in the desire to increase his business, he has a constant use for it. But the man who inherits it has none of this. The first satisfaction, and the greatest, that of building the foundation of a fortune, is denied him. He must labor, if he does labor, simply to add to an over-sufficiency." <sup>12</sup>



On the 28th of June, 1914, the President of the Republic and Madame Poincaré arrived late, in their *daumont*, for the Grand Prix de Paris. Some clubmen may have excused the tardiness of the statesman: on this occasion, W. K. Vanderbilt was not competing for the stake. But few turfmen can have excused the curious behavior of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador: he left before the Rothschild entry, Sardanapale, secured the prize.

On the following 28th of July, Willie K. won the Prix Turenne at Chantilly with Fortinbras. On that very day, however, the *Ballhausplatz* had issued an awkward proclamation: <sup>13</sup>

"The Servian Government not having replied in a satisfactory manner to the note which was handed to it on July 23, 1914, by the Austro-Hungarian Minister, the Imperial

and Royal Government finds itself obliged to take steps to safeguard its rights and interests.

“It considers itself from the present moment in a state of war with Servia.”

## V

“I know of no profession, art or trade, that women are working in today,” Alva Belmont once declared, “as taxing on mental resource as being a leader of society.” While the wife of Willie K., she chose acorns as the arms of the House of Vanderbilt. “Great oaks from little acorns grow,” she reminded Mrs. Harry Lehr. Upon the death of her second husband, she spent her personality on architecture and women’s suffrage. At Newport, she already owned, besides “Marble House,” “Belcourt,” a château Hunt designed for Oliver Belmont. Nevertheless, she was soon commissioning more palaces. She ordered “Brookholt,” a colonial manor at Hempstead; then “Beacon Towers,” a castle at Sands Point. In New York, she commanded a new town house at 477 Madison Avenue. Ultimately, possibly in envy of the Vanderbilt Mausoleum, she decided on a splendid Gothic tomb all her own in Woodlawn Cemetery. Admittedly, she deserved the membership she won in the American Institute of Architects. Although Alva, in 1915, confessed that Billy Sunday was a “bigger thing” than the vote for women, she never wavered in her allegiance to her second cause. After compelling



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Consuelo to deliver an address to suffragettes on the lawn of "Marble House," she herself wrote the libretto for *Melinda and Her Sisters*, an operetta with music by Elsa Maxwell which urged the ballot. Incidentally, she never permitted her political endeavors to impeach her social position. She was able, in these years, to place a newcomer in society: Mrs. William B. Leeds. And she tolerated, in none of her homes, those who accepted the hospitality of the second Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt. Indeed, she let it be whispered that she disapproved even of Anne Harriman's charities.<sup>1</sup>

It was Anne who induced Willie K. to donate \$1,000,000 for the construction, on the block bounded by Avenues A and B, and Seventy-seventh and Seventy-eighth Streets, of a tenement at low rentals for tuberculars. She conducted, also, an active campaign against narcotics in New York, and succeeded in hindering, by the passage of the Boylan Bill, the sale of drugs except by prescription. During the World War, she served industriously at the American Hospital at Neuilly, and fairly deserved her reward: the rank of Chevalière in the Legion of Honor. W. K. Vanderbilt had given more than a quarter million to Columbia University; more than a million to Vanderbilt. Now, captivated by the enthusiasm of the American volunteer aviators in France, he devoted his serious attention to the Lafayette Flying Corps. He remembered, of course, the American Hospital with \$40,000; the Italian Red Cross with \$200,000, but he derived, indisputably, more satisfaction from assuming the expenses of that first U. S. expeditionary force. "Like other Americans who were in close touch with the War," Nordhoff and Hall, the historians

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of the Lafayette Escadrille, have written, "Mr. Vanderbilt was strongly opposed to the neutrality of the United States." <sup>2</sup>

When, at long last, we did enter on the side of the Allies, W. K. Vanderbilt gladly turned the 800 acres of "Idle Hour" into potato fields to feed our soldiers. He and other millionaires, summoned by the Sixteenth Amendment to pay an income tax, had already undergone a hardship far more severe than the loss of the lawns of their villas. Aware of a trend, Willie K. lightened his tax burden by placing \$8,500,000 in trust for Anne. <sup>3</sup>

It was in this disquieting era that the Vanderbilts sanctioned the sale of the Nickel Plate to the brothers Oris Paxton and Mantis James Van Sweringen. <sup>4</sup>



At the reopening of Longchamp in May 1919, the Vanderbilt colors secured signal triumphs. The War cannot have affected the stud, for McKinley won the Prix de Guiche and Forearm the Prix de la Grotte. In June, Tchad gained the Prix du Jockey Club. <sup>5</sup>

On his seventieth birthday, which he passed on December 12, 1919, the grandson of the Commodore may have drawn deep delight from his myth. With Alva, he had given a Ball which no one could rival, apparently, without incurring exile. With Alva, he had built 660 Fifth Avenue, whose graceful splendor surely initiated the trend which turned New York from a town of complacent brownstone dwellings into a city of competitive châteaux. In France, thanks to winning four times the Prix du Jockey Club, he would henceforth haunt

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the turf as actually as the late Lord Brougham haunted Cannes.

It was in April 1920, while attending the races at Auteuil, that Vanderbilt suffered the heart attack which announced that he had not long to live. Notwithstanding, he could not cancel his entries. He insisted that his silks participate in the better stakes, until, on the afternoon of July 21, he withdrew his horses from all events at Le Tremblay. On the next day, the ornamental millionaire expired in the presence of his physician, his wife, and his three children.<sup>6</sup>

Although W. K. Vanderbilt was reported to have given \$15,000,000 to Consuelo shortly before he died, and \$1,000,000 each to her two sons, the Marquess of Blandford and Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill, he did not disappoint his other heirs. The House, not long after bearing his body to the Staten Island tomb, learned that his estate totaled \$54,530,966.59.<sup>7</sup> His attractive assets included:

\$884,068 on deposit with the First National Bank of  
New York,

\$182,344 on deposit with the Guaranty Trust Company  
of New York,

\$222,934 on deposit with the Guaranty Trust Company  
in Paris,

130,000 shares of New York Central, valued at \$9,002,500,

80,000 shares of Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, valued at  
\$8,400,000,

56,000 shares of Delaware, Lackawanna & Western,  
valued at \$11,200,000,



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8,375 shares of Chicago & North Western common, valued at \$586,250,  
15,000 shares of Chicago & North Western preferred, valued at \$1,500,000,  
16,640 shares of Pullman, valued at \$1,913,000,  
49 East Fifty-second Street, an apartment house valued at \$450,000,  
Winter Garden, Broadway and Fifty-first Street, valued at \$800,000, and  
660 Fifth Avenue, valued at \$2,300,000.

On these and other holdings, his executors paid the inheritance tax of \$1,934,571.73, the highest yet exacted in Suffolk County.<sup>8</sup>

After Saint Mark's Church at Islip (near Oakdale) received \$50,000, Vanderbilt University, \$250,000, and the Metropolitan Museum works of art worth \$1,005,000, the capitalist's widow obtained \$109,196.47, the *hôtel particulier* at 10, rue Leroux, and the life estate in the Château of Le Quesnay. Her daughters (Margaret Rutherford, the wife of Ogden Mills; Barbara Rutherford, the wife of Cyril Hatch) inherited \$100,000 each. Besides attaining the right to the income from \$2,500,000, Consuelo shared, equally with her two brothers, in \$5,000,000 outright. Her younger brother Harold acquired "Idle Hour"; her older brother's son W. K. Vanderbilt III obtained \$423,526. Then, as residuary legatees under the will, W. K. Vanderbilt II gained \$21,252,757.38; Harold Stirling Vanderbilt, \$21,739,857.38.<sup>9</sup>

## VI

“This is”—Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont braved reporters—“merely one of those adjustments.” Yet the Roman Catholic Courts, on the 12th of November, 1926, had dissolved the union of Consuelo Vanderbilt with the Duke of Marlborough.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1907, the Duke and Duchess realized that their marriage could not succeed, but rather than divorce, they entered, at the suggestion of King Edward, into a private agreement to separate. The Marlboroughs did not dwell again together until 1919, and then not for long. The Duke, although his younger son had just come of age, forsook the Duchess in December. “Dear Sunny,” the disconsolate Consuelo replied to his note of farewell, “I wish you had spoken to me instead of writing. It seems a pity that we ever came together again only for everything to end like this. It is useless to say more; I must go away and rest.” A few weeks afterward, she sent a second letter: “While I have been away, I have thought over everything, and you, too, have had time to reflect. So I am writing to ask you to reconsider your decision not to return to me. If you will do so, I can assure you that nothing on my part will be wanting to try to make you happy.”<sup>2</sup>

His Grace, nevertheless, did not reconsider. The Marlboroughs then filed a petition for the restitution of conjugal rights, the usual preliminary to divorce. On May 13, 1921,

they parted legally. The Duke now chose a second Duchess: Gladys Deacon, daughter of the Bostonian who spent a year in the prisons of France for the murder of the man whom he declared he surprised in the boudoir of his wife. Consuelo, in her turn, remarried. She wedded, on the 4th of July, Lieutenant Colonel Louis-Jacques Balsan, a retired officer of the French army. Balsan, eight years the senior of the forty-four-year-old ex-Duchess, was not unknown in London. During the War, he had participated in the French Aëronautical Mission. His fortune, derived from the sale of blankets and uniforms to the armed forces of the Third Republic, permitted amusements. He maintained a stable; he piloted airplanes and balloons.<sup>3</sup>

Religion, however, complicated the marriage of Balsan to Consuelo Vanderbilt just as it did that of Marlborough to Gladys Deacon. The Colonel was Catholic; Marlborough, in those years, abandoned the Anglican Communion for that of Rome. In the opinion of the Roman Catholic Church, the unions just contracted by the divorcés did not exist. Understandably, therefore, both couples studied the ceremony of 1895 and speculated on the possibilities of an annulment. Ultimately, the principals in the Vanderbilt-Marlborough Wedding testified before the Rota. The Tribunal weighed the evidence, and agreed, in this case, to annul an Episcopalian marriage. The Roman decision angered William T. Manning, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of New York. He assailed the Catholic Church for invading his spiritual realm; he little cared that Consuelo, in 1895, had given her heart to Winthrop Rutherford.<sup>4</sup>

The Rota disclosed that passion. "Born of a very distin-



guished American family, baptized, but not of Catholic religion, Consuelo Vanderbilt, when she reached the age of seventeen, fell violently in love with a certain Rutherford with whom she had become secretly engaged," the Tribunal announced. "Her mother, learning of this, peremptorily refused to grant her daughter's wish, and in order to destroy the love already born in her daughter's heart, led her to Europe in 1894. As Consuelo was a girl who took with her, youth, beauty, and a great fortune, she thought of marrying her to some man who occupied a pre-eminent position among the greatest English nobility. Having met in London Charles, Duke of Marlborough, she invited him as a guest of the family to Newport. He accepted the invitation, and in September 1895 went to Newport, where for about fifteen days he lived with the Vanderbilt family. On the day before his departure, he asked Consuelo to be his wife. Consuelo ran to her mother, but the next day the news was unjustly spread in the newspapers of her wonderful engagement to the Duke. This was her mother's doing."

"My mother tore me from the influence of my sweetheart," Consuelo testified before the Catholic Court. "She made me leave the country. She intercepted all the letters my sweetheart wrote and all of mine to him. She caused continual scenes. She said I must obey. She said I knew very well that I had no right to choose a husband, that I must take the man she had chosen, that my refusal was ruining her health, and that I might be the cause of her death. There was a terrible scene in which she told me that if I succeeded in escaping, she would shoot my sweetheart, and she would, therefore, be imprisoned, and hanged, and I would be responsible.

“Having then destroyed the possibility of my marrying the man I loved, Mother told me that she had chosen a man for me whom she considered suitable in all respects, that he was about to arrive in America as her guest, and that she had already negotiated my marriage with him. . . . I insist on declaring that I married the Duke of Marlborough yielding to the tremendous pressure of my mother, and following her wish absolutely.

“The arrogance of the Duke’s character,” Consuelo remembered, “created in me a sentiment of hostility. He seemed to despise anything that was not British, and therefore my feelings were hurt.”

“She told me,” Marlborough swore before the Tribunal, “that her mother had insisted on her marrying me, that her mother was strongly opposed to her marrying Rutherford, that she had used every form of pressure short of physical violence to reach her end.”

Consuelo’s aunt corroborated her testimony. “My sister,” Mrs. Tiffany (the former Mrs. Yznaga) stated, “was continually making scenes. Despite all this, Consuelo did not easily fall in with her mother’s wishes. It is on record that she broke down and wept when first told she must marry the Duke, and did so again the next day when her engagement to him was announced in the newspapers. She had nobody to whom she could turn, not even her father, because her father and mother were separated by divorce, and because, as all the witnesses unanimously declared, she would have fallen under the influence of the obstinacy and imperiousness of her mother anyhow. That Consuelo was coerced is further shown by the fact that her mother, fearing that she might, at the last

moment, change her mind and retract her consent to wed Marlborough, placed a guard at the door of her room on the day of the wedding so that nobody could speak to or even approach her."

"I forced my daughter to marry the Duke," Alva admitted to the Rota. "I have always had absolute power over my daughter, my children having been entrusted to me entirely after my divorce. I alone had charge of their education. When I issued an order, nobody discussed it. I therefore did not beg, but ordered her to marry the Duke." <sup>5</sup>

Thenceforward, Colonel and Madame Balsan withdrew from notoriety. They lived tranquilly, in Paris, at 2, rue du Général Lambert; on their estate near Dreux; and at their villa "Lou Sueil," at Eze, near Monte Carlo. Alva, now reconciled with Consuelo, dwelt not far from her: in Paris, at 9, rue Monsieur; at Eze, in the "Villa Isoletta"; and, near Dreux, at Augerville-la-rivière in a château once the property of Jacques Coeur. The aging Mrs. Belmont, in those times, recognized the fragility of other glories than her daughter's ducal liaison. In 1932, on the recommendation of her sons, she parted with "Marble House." She sold that cottage to F. H. Prince of Armour & Company for \$100,000. She had saved another Hunt monument, "Belcourt," from the indignity of a tax sale only by advancing \$10,000 which Perry Belmont, the owner of his brother's château since 1916, owed Newport in arrears. <sup>6</sup>

On the 26th day of January 1933 Alva died in Paris, aged eighty years, eight days. She had asked for a feminist funeral, but to the torment of her ashes, a man and not a woman read the rites at Saint Bartholomew's. Inside the



church, a faded suffragette banner flapped this challenge to her careless children: FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE.<sup>7</sup>



Anne Vanderbilt, early in 1921, followed her friends Anne (the sister of the second J. P.) Morgan and Elisabeth Marbury to a new quarter of New York: Sutton Place. There, at Number One North, she commissioned Mott B. Schmidt to redesign a brownstone dwelling. The comfortable Georgian residence which he created, and which Elsie de Wolfe decorated, presented for the moment so attractive a solution of the tax problem that many millionaires, weary of meeting assessments on Fifth Avenue palazzi, investigated small homes and flats on the East River. In 1925, H. S. and W. K. Vanderbilt II stimulated the trend to abandon châteaux by selling 660 Fifth Avenue for three millions. Two years afterward, a real-estate operator replaced Hunt's *chef-d'œuvre* with an office building. Meantime, fewer capitalists cared to maintain vast Long Island estates. A charitable organization, the Royal Order of Metaphysicians, eventually assumed the responsibility of "Idle Hour."<sup>8</sup>

It would be idle to complicate the history of the House of Vanderbilt with the story of the children of Anne Vanderbilt by her first two marriages. Briefly told, their lives are these: Her sons by Samuel Sands, Samuel Sands, Jr., and G. Winthrop Sands, both met death in automobile accidents. The widow of the former chose as her second husband a rising broker, Richard Whitney. Anne's daughters by Lewis Rutherfurd once gained a brief notoriety by following the cult of Yoga. Margaret Rutherfurd married, and then di-

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vorced, Ogden Mills, Sir Paul Dukes, and Prince Charles Murat before she wedded a certain Frederic Leybourne Sprague. Barbara Rutherfurd, who is no longer living, married and then divorced Cyril Hatch and Winfield Nicholls. . . . On the outbreak of the present European War, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt came again to the defense of the Third Republic, and accepted the honorary vice-presidency of the American Friends of France, which Anne Morgan founded. She was attending to that international philanthropy when she fell ill and died in New York on April 20, 1940.<sup>9</sup>



Winston Churchill saluted the dividends of the Beech Creek Railway when he wrote these lines on the death of the Duke of Marlborough in 1934: "As politics grew more vehement and democratic, the Duke's life became that of a sportsman and country gentleman. Many happy years were spent by him and his friends amid the spacious fields and noble woodlands of Blenheim Palace. But always there weighed upon him the size and cost of the great house which was the monument of his ancestor's victories. This he conceived to be almost his first duty in life to preserve and embellish. As the successive crashes of taxation descended upon the Old World, it was only by ceaseless care and management that he was able to discharge his task. He sacrificed much to this—too much, but he succeeded; and at his death Blenheim passed from his care in a finer state than ever."<sup>10</sup>

In 1935, when Madame Jacques Balsan opened an American home—a villa at Palm Beach designed by Treanor and Fatio—Winthrop Rutherfurd was in residence at Aiken. He

had, since Consuelo's ducal alliance, contracted two uneventful marriages: first, with Alice, the daughter of Levi Morton, who died in 1917; second, with a Lucy Mercer.<sup>11</sup>

## VII

On the morning of April 4, 1899, the ballroom of the palace of Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs at 1 East Fifty-seventh Street acutely resembled the Italian Garden of the Royal Residence at Sandringham. Artificially attached, 48,000 hybrid roses dressed eight rose trees. The marvelous floral garment clung snugly, as if stitched to the bushes. Mrs. Oelrichs was celebrating the wedding of her sister Virginia Graham ("Birdie") Fair to William Kissam Vanderbilt II, the older son of the owner of 660 Fifth Avenue.

It is possible that Willie K. the younger entered Harvard University in the fall of 1897 with every intention of graduating. While a freshman, he obtained the position of associate business manager of the *Advocate*. As a sophomore, he joined the Institute of 1770. But before the end of 1898, he met and won the heart of Virginia Graham Fair, daughter of the late Senator James Graham Fair, who amassed no less than \$15,000,000 from the Comstock Lode. And as soon as Tessie Oelrichs announced her sister's engagement, Vanderbilt gave up all thought of returning to Cambridge. With his fiancée, he greeted his college friends at a *souper* in his father's château. Later, he reunited his classmates at a



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Bachelor Dinner at Sherry's Restaurant. When he bade that farewell to education, canary birds hummed in the golden cages of the marble conservatory of the restaurateur.

Since Miss Fair was of the Catholic faith, the Reverend Thomas F. Murphy, acting rector of the Church of the Sacred Heart at Dobbs Ferry, read the service which united her to the railway millionaire. Emile Paur led an orchestra of thirty in Mendelssohn's "Spring Song" and in Händel's "Largo"; lastly, Nathan Franko conducted a band in less serious selections. The domestics who served the collation wore, as was proper, the livery of Louis Sherry.<sup>1</sup>

It might seem, on first inspection of this *décor*, that the second W. K. Vanderbilt could improve, in all respects, upon the elaborate tradition of his father. It is therefore sad to relate that he has dallied with, rather than patronized, architecture. He and Virginia moved, when married seven years, into 666 Fifth Avenue, a French château which Stanford White designed in the spirit of the castle next door south: 660. But the senior, not the junior Willie K., commissioned this new monument.<sup>2</sup>

In search, perhaps, of relief from spiritual unemployment, the second W. K. Vanderbilt was quick to cultivate a taste for the then novel swiftness of motor cars. Shortly after his marriage, he alarmed the Newport Police with "The Red Devil," a Mercedes which he imported from Germany to shame the racer of Foxhall Keene. When local authorities declined to countenance speed contests on Bellevue Avenue, Vanderbilt competed for a period on the European highways. In 1902, he dashed from Monte Carlo to Paris in seventeen hours. Although he did not meet with such success in races to

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Madrid and Vienna, he smiled if motor trouble withdrew his machine, and retired chuckling to his suite at the Ritz Hotel. At length, in 1904, he won three spectacular events at Ormond Beach with his German auto. Surprised by the victories of his foreign car, Willie K. decided to prompt American automobile manufacturers to equal French and German achievements in engineering. To that end, he founded the Vanderbilt Cup Races; he invited motor cars weighing more than 881 pounds and less than 2,024 to strive for a 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ -gallon cup designed by Tiffany and Company. Eventually, in 1916, Vanderbilt withdrew the trophy; by that time, Locomobiles, as well as Panhards and Peugeots, had finished first.<sup>3</sup>

It would be an exaggeration to state that W. K. Vanderbilt II has ever cherished the New York Central. While it is true that he entered the employ of the railroad in 1903, and that nine years later he secured the position of vice-president, it is unlikely that he developed an excessive fondness for car-loadings. On the 1st of June, 1918, he did succeed A. H. Smith as President and managed the property until that official returned from serving the government railway program. But every evening, upon leaving the railroad offices, he attended classes in navigation under Robert Huntington at the Merchant Marine School of the Seamen's Church Institute. In the year in which he secured, temporarily, the presidency of the system, he acquired what was undoubtedly in his eyes far more significant: a master's certificate. He proved to be a diligent night student; in 1927 he had his certificate endorsed for all oceans and for unlimited tonnage.

In the "Osprey," a half-rater built at the Herreshoff works,

Willie K. began yachting at the age of sixteen. Next, he chartered a sloop, the "Jessica." Then, during his vacation from Harvard University, he captained the "Carmita," a seventy-foot single-masted fore-and-aft-rigged ship. Eventually, he invested in the 153-foot steam turbine "Tarantula." Since he had not yet come into his inheritance, he approved the construction of a ship without sufficient coal capacity to allow a transatlantic voyage. Apparently, he had no intention of rivaling Jay Gould's son George Jay Gould, whose steam turbine yacht stretched 236 feet overall.<sup>4</sup>

Vanderbilt did not permit the World War to interrupt his education as a mariner. He did sea duty on board the second ship he called "Tarantula," then designated SP 124. His service in the U. S. Navy, from March 29, 1917, to June 1, 1918, prepared him for a promotion he won in 1920: the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Reserve. Once the War ended, he increased the tonnage under his pennant by purchasing the schooner "Genesee" and the steam-propelled "Eagle."

But the millionaire did not dignify his fleet until 1922, when he acquired through Tams and King the 213-foot Diesel yacht "Ara." Commenced in 1914 at the works of Camper and Nicholson at Southampton, completed in 1917, she had served in the French Navy as a sloop-of-war. Although Lloyd's classified the craft, which displaced 1,200 tons, as 100 A-1, Willie K. demanded more of the vessel than her original owner Captain Heriot. In 1925, he ordered the Atlas Diesel Company of Stockholm to replace her original twin 860-horsepower motors with Diesels capable of 1,200 each.



Even then, he preferred a greater cruising radius and more storage than she provided.<sup>5</sup>

Already, in 1926, W. K. Vanderbilt II had crossed the Atlantic five times on board the "Ara," when he decided to undertake a voyage to the Galápagos Islands. He invited J. Gordon Douglas, Mrs. Josephine Leidig, and Mr. and Mrs. Barclay H. Warburton, Jr., to accompany him on this cruise to the haunt of his friend William Beebe, but he also included an expert fisherman and an artist: William E. Belanske. The capitalist, who acted as captain, was sailing to the South American coast with no idle aim, but with the objective of collecting marine specimens. Belanske, trained ten years at the American Museum of Natural History, was to paint the unusual wild life of the islands. Willie K. kept a careful journal on this excursion. He listed the blackbellied mouth fish, the paperheads, the orange puffers, the throat whiskers, the sea devils, the scarlet prawns, the banded seranós, the flightless cormorants, the brown boobies, and the Galápagos herons he and his assistants snatched, and he naturally did not omit the new species of band-tailed cat shark which they discovered and named *Pristinius Arae Nichols*, after the yacht. And so the millionaire indicated that he had not ended his education in the marble conservatory of Sherry's Restaurant.<sup>6</sup>

Not many months after the "Ara" returned from South America, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt II departed for Europe by liner. In Paris, she stopped at the Hotel Crillon. She politely denied rumors, but on the 2nd of June, 1927, she separated legally from Willie K. They had not lived together since 1909. In the following autumn, her former husband wedded

Mrs. Warburton at the Mairie of the Sixteenth Arrondissement. Rose Warburton, the daughter of Mrs. John Lancaster, had divorced Barclay, the grandson of John Wanamaker, late in 1926.<sup>7</sup>

In New York, Mrs. Graham Fair Vanderbilt, as Willie K.'s first wife was now known, no sooner leased three floors of an apartment building at 660 Park Avenue than she regained her appetite for town houses. In 1930, two years after the shop of a furrier replaced her château at 666 Fifth Avenue, she commissioned John Russell Pope to create an *hôtel particulier* at 60 East Ninety-third Street. Pope succeeded in designing a residence perfectly (a modern architect would say: absurdly) evocative of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. On Long Island, the divorcée purchased the country seat at Manhasset of the late Frank Munsey. The architecture of that villa, originally the home of Louis Sherry, reminded nostalgic guests of Marie Antoinette's Hameau at Versailles.<sup>8</sup>

When Willie K., in 1924, moved from 49 East Fifty-second Street, which he and Harold inherited, he leased a *maisonette* in the apartment tower rising at the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Sixty-seventh Street. In disdain of architecture, he selected an inconspicuous building. Yet he has not always been indifferent to Hunt's profession, for he did ask John Russell Pope to design an English gatehouse for his manor, "Deepdale," at Great Neck, and in that instance proved himself a difficult patron. Pope sought throughout Europe for the tiles needed for the roof of the cottage before he found them in the ruins of a church in Indiana. And he hired a ship's carpenter, since no other laborer pos-

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sessed the skill, to execute the genuine half-timber construction of the lodge. Vanderbilt, however, has since disposed of that estate. At Northport, near Huntington, he dwells in a newer villa, fashioned by Warren and Wetmore. On the property stands a Marine Museum, of which William E. Belanske is curator.<sup>9</sup>

In the autumn of 1928, Willie K. with his wife and a few friends left Northport on the "Ara" for a cruise round the world. This expedition captured such oddities as the golden flutemouth, the barked scale wrasse, the calico razor wrasse, the Moorish idol, the fringed pipefish, and the bluelined butterfly fish. The catch satisfied Belanske, but the voyage disappointed the millionaire in his yacht. Aware, now, of the discomfort her restricted water supply and limited cruising radius caused, he ordered Cox and Stevens, in 1930, to draw the plans for a new ship to replace the craft on which he had traveled, all told, 135,991 miles.<sup>10</sup>

In 1931, Vanderbilt inspected and approved at Kiel a 264-foot Diesel yacht. He named this product of the Krupp Germaniawerft "Alva." Two Krupp Diesel engines of 2,100 brake horsepower each at 150 revolutions a minute insured a sustained sea speed of seventeen knots, while two six-cylinder additional Diesels provided auxiliary power. Transverse bulkheads divided the hull into sixteen watertight compartments, eleven of which were complete with watertight doors which opened or shut simultaneously at a signal from the bridge. The personal liner displaced, fully loaded, 3,600 tons. When launched, she cost but \$1,700,000; when decorated, \$2,500,000. "Alva" requires a crew of forty-three.<sup>11</sup>

In July, the carefree director of the New York Central



commenced, on this, the most powerful yacht in the world, another cruise around the globe. Once again, the thoughtful valet Jenkinson knocked each morning at his cabin door with coffee. Once more, Belanske collected rare specimens for the marine museum. Apparently, no market quotations, however unfortunate, could alter "Alva's" course. But on reaching Spain, on the last lap of the voyage, the capitalist glanced at the latest reports from the New York Stock Exchange. "Central had hit 25," he wrote in his diary. "It was time to go home." The family stock, which had soared to 256½ in 1929, was soon to touch 8¾.<sup>12</sup>

In 1931, the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives enlivened the Third Session of the Seventy-first Congress with an unusually thorough investigation of the dominant shareholdings in our railroads. The inquest established that the Vanderbilts, however indifferent they might be to railway problems, still held substantial investments in the carriers. The Oregon Short Line, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific, now owned the largest identifiable interest in the New York Central: 5.35 per cent of the voting power. But the Vanderbilt Family, with 238,663 shares of the capital stock, claimed the second largest block: 4.78 per cent of the voting power. (The George F. Bakers of the First National Bank of New York ranked third among the shareholders.) While the New York Central controlled half of the capital stock of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, the House of Vanderbilt, with 217,645 shares, or 25.19 per cent of the voting power, stood second. The aforementioned House of Baker held 10.27 per cent, the supreme voting power in the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western. The

Vanderbilts, however, owned the second greatest block of stock in that road: 128,000 shares, or 7.58 per cent of the voting power. And although various Vanderbilts possessed only 28,000 shares common and 34,358 shares preferred of the Chicago & North Western, they dominated that line with 3.45 per cent of the voting power. Willie K. himself held 27,585 shares of Central, 25,890 shares of Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, 45,400 shares of Lackawanna, and 4,250 shares of North Western preferred.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from his interest in rails—apart, too, from his minor commitment, as a director, in Western Union—the second W. K. Vanderbilt could of course possess an admirable portfolio, properly diversified. Neither Central, North Western, nor Lackawanna has paid dividends since 1931, but the millionaire has never modified his manner of living. In 1934, although Chicago & North Western earned only 51 per cent of fixed charges, W. K. gratified his desire for a \$57,000 seaplane, which he placed on the deck of the “Alva,” in charge of his personal pilot. When he acquired, two years later, a 9¾-ton Sikorsky S 43 amphibian, similar to the clippers of the Pan American Airways, he insisted on two extra gasoline tanks, and on an improved instrument board. In that superb plane, he circled South America in 1937. For eleven hours, he replaced his retainer Earl White at the controls. Afterward, with the modesty of a sportsman, he deprecated the 104 hours he had flown all told. “I have no pilot’s license, and my guess is, I won’t get one,” he chronicled in his journal. “A little too old to get at this game, but it is nice to feel one knows a little about the ship.” Meanwhile, the North Western had gone into bankruptcy. His other rail-



way holdings, with the exception of Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, were precarious.<sup>14</sup>

Neither the philanthropies nor the children of this Vanderbilt have attracted undue attention. Willie K. has, however, given \$112,500 to Vanderbilt University. Recently, he presented an old asset of the family, the Long Island Motor Parkway, to the people of New York. His only son, the third W. K. Vanderbilt, died in 1933, at the age of twenty-six, in an automobile accident near Savannah, Georgia. Although his daughters, Muriel and Consuelo, once sat for the elegant painter Boldini, they have since escaped refined notoriety. Muriel, after marrying, and divorcing, first the Boston insurance broker Frederic Cameron Church, Jr., second the Providence bond salesman Henry Delafield Phelps, has now assumed the title of Mrs. Vanderbilt Phelps. She lives at Mission Ranch, Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. Consuelo, after marrying, and divorcing, first the broker Earl E. T. Smith, second the investment counselor Henry Gassaway Davis III (once the husband of another Vanderbilt, Consuelo's second cousin Grace), has just taken the name of Mrs. Vanderbilt Fair. In New York, she maintains a town house at 11 East Seventieth Street.<sup>15</sup>

Meantime, Mrs. Graham Fair Vanderbilt had passed away, at 60 East Ninety-third Street, on the 7th of July, 1935. Her health, easily undermined after the death of W. K. Vanderbilt III, did not resist anaemia and pneumonia. She created, in her will, three trust funds: one to pay \$150,000 a year to Muriel; one to pay \$75,000 a year to Consuelo; another, to pay \$50,000 a year to the third Willie K. (His share now reverted to the residuary estate.) She devised her



jewelry and table silver to Muriel, but she bequeathed to Consuelo both 60 East Ninety-third Street and "Fairmont," her villa at Manhasset. The town house has passed into the hands of Walter Chrysler's daughter, Mrs. Byron C. Foy. The country home has not been used so politely. "Fairmont," to-day, serves as the clubhouse of a moderate-priced real-estate development.<sup>16</sup>

If, in his sixty-three years, the second W. K. has never entertained desperately, he has preserved, intact, a fine indifference to the market performance of railroad stocks. On the afternoon of November 18, 1938, Pittsburgh & Lake Erie closed at 56, Central at  $18\frac{3}{4}$ , Lackawanna at  $7\frac{3}{4}$ , North Western preferred at 3 and North Western common at  $\frac{7}{8}$ . On that evening his stepdaughter Miss Rosemary Warburton made her début in the roof-garden suite of the Saint Regis. At midnight, Willie K. and his wife graciously welcomed the guests who rose in the *art nouveau* elevators of the ultimate hotel. The Vanderbilts greeted, among others, Mr. and Mrs. John Jacob Astor VI, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Field III, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Goelet. Those millionaires delighted in the ball gown of the débutante. She wore a pink bouffant frock, the creation of Molyneux. For an interval, the party-goers danced to the music of Emil Coleman. Then, at one-thirty in the morning, the guests sat down to supper at tables garlanded with pink and white flowers from the conservatories of Constance Spry.<sup>17</sup>

Since that *souper*, the W. K. Vanderbilts have lunched regularly at the Colony Restaurant. Recently, they have taken to dining at Fefe's Monte Carlo. In the season, they have made sudden trips by seaplane to Newport. And they

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have continued their travels on board the "Alva." The New York Central Railroad, in 1938, suffered the greatest deficit in history, \$20,145,357.

## VIII

On the 3rd of October, 1935, Jesse H. Jones, Chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, passed judgment on an essential holding of the Vanderbilt family. "I think the New York Central has a pretty good operating management," he conceded, "but it probably has had too much banker management—and still has." Harold Stirling Vanderbilt, of the Finance Committee of the railway, did not answer the accusation of the official.<sup>1</sup>

Already, in April, the R.F.C. had criticized the floating debt of the railroad by suggesting that all call loans from banks be placed on a time basis. In September, the lending organization recommended that the New York Central issue \$90,000,000 of 4-per-cent bonds convertible into capital stock at \$25 the share, and with the proceeds retire both the \$63,000,000 owed banks on demand and the \$27,000,000 owed the Federal agency. The plan, which promised the eventual creation, through conversion, of 3,600,000 more shares of Central, pleased neither Harold Vanderbilt nor the bankers of the road.<sup>2</sup>

"I am anxious to improve the railroad security market"—Jones explained his proposal to a reporter from the *Wall*

*Street Journal* on September 10—"and believe that funding of the New York Central's bank and R.F.C. loans on a permanent basis would bring this about." Later in the interview, the Chairman counseled the banks to "take their share of the proposed conversion loan." That advice aroused the suspicions of financiers. On the 18th, George Whitney of J. P. Morgan & Company and Jackson E. Reynolds of the First National Bank of New York, as leaders of a committee of the lending institutions, wrote Harold Vanderbilt that they vetoed the projected issue. Whitney and Reynolds feared that "taking their share" would be the equivalent of engaging in underwriting, an activity forbidden by recent legislation.<sup>3</sup>

Irritated, Harold seconded their objection. "Candidly, and I know you will forgive me for being frank," he informed Jones on the 19th, "I cannot see what useful purpose is served by publication of interviews. . . . I feel that repeated reference to financial plans that cannot at present succeed is distinctly harmful to our company, and might militate somewhat against the eventual culmination of some such issue."

"I certainly have no desire to annoy you or your bankers," the Chairman of the R.F.C. replied on the 29th, "but I would be derelict in my duty if I did not do what I could to assist in correcting what I know to be an unhealthy situation. You and they seem to forget that I am a government official lending government funds, and that the public is interested in the R.F.C. activities and in the New York Central's finances. You forget that these interviews to which you object are the result of pertinent inquiry by the press. But if you will search the newspaper files, you will find no statement by me that



could be harmful to the New York Central or to any other management that has to borrow from the R.F.C.

“I appreciate,” he concluded, “that some bankers and corporate officials do not like publicity, but railroads are required by law to make public their entire activities, as is also the R.F.C. Yours is one of the prominent railway systems, and the condition of its finances is of interest to the public. One very good way to avoid further publicity of this sort would be to put your finances in order.”<sup>4</sup>

On October 3rd, Central shares softened on the New York Stock Exchange as Jones, adamant, insisted: “Any railroad man who has to work to meet his fixed charges should be glad to get as much as possible of his debt converted into stock.” Apparently, the official had slight regard for the existing debt-reduction program of the system. For a period, cooperation between the railway and the lending agency appeared unlikely. Then, on the 20th of November, the New York Central agreed to pay on December 1 the \$15,600,000 coming due the R.F.C. in return for an extension of the remaining \$11,899,000 until July 1, 1941.<sup>5</sup>

However cogently Harold Vanderbilt represented in this controversy the viewpoint of the financiers of the New York Central Railroad, he has never attained in business quite the prominence he has won in amusement. To be sure, he applied himself soberly enough to his education. At Saint Mark's School, he obtained the Founder's Medal for Scholarship. At Harvard, he completed his undergraduate studies in three years. In 1910, he received his degree from Harvard Law School. And early in 1911, he became assistant to Clyde Brown, the general solicitor of the Central. Today, in addi-

tion to being a director of that railway and subsidiaries, he is a member of the board of the First National Bank of New York, of the Pullman Company, of the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, and of the Chicago & North Western. However, when he and the second Willie K. parted, in 1926, with their box at the Metropolitan Opera, he probably dedicated his share of the \$200,000 obtained from Frazier Jelke to other purposes than the increase of his holdings. In the next year, he ordered a superb Fokker Air Yacht from the Atlantic Aircraft Corporation. This seaplane, the third of his fleet, was capable of cruising for five hours at 90 miles an hour with six passengers on board. Her top speed, 115 miles an hour; her wingspan, 59 feet; and her watercooled 450-horsepower Napier engine were, at that time, astonishing. The Fokker, which was similar to the giant planes flying in the Dutch East Indies, involved an annual expenditure—including the pilot's pay, \$6,000, and the mechanic's salary, \$3,000—of \$23,000. She was of course the largest privately owned air yacht in America. In 1936, Harold enlarged his flotilla by buying a twin-engined low-wing Lockheed Electra Monoplane. This ship, designed by Cox and Stevens, carried six passengers too. But her Wasp Junior motors provided a cruising speed of over 200 miles an hour. And the club lounge of the personal air liner contained, besides a buffet, a card table.<sup>6</sup>

It is pleasant to record that Harold could easily harass the Commodore at five-point euchre. For long years, the great-grandson devoted evening upon evening to auction bridge. Then, in 1925, he startled his card-playing acquaintances by renovating that diversion. While on board a steamship bound from Los Angeles to Havana, he suggested that bridge could

be improved by following the principle found in the French *plafond*; namely, that games must be bid in order to be scored. He and his associates soon recommended, in addition, larger bonuses for bidding and making slams. They had discovered contract bridge. In 1927, the Whist Club drew up rules and based a scoring table on Vanderbilt's theory. Later, the Portland Club of London consulted the millionaire before drafting the contract code. Meanwhile, Harold was studying bidding methods. In time, he evolved a bidding system which he founded on the number of artificial bids. While he named his device the Club Convention, others referred to the Vanderbilt Club. In 1928, Harold donated a silver cup for annual competition between contract teams. Twice, in 1932 and in 1940, he has won his own trophy. And he has published two books on his addiction: *Contract Bridge* in 1929, and *The New Contract Bridge* in 1930. Probably it would be cruel to observe that this Vanderbilt disciplined his able mind, at Saint Mark's and at Harvard, only in order to excel at hobbies.<sup>7</sup>

Recently, petulant, perhaps inexperienced bridge-players have questioned the premise of the Club Convention. As yet no competent judges have doubted Harold's seamanship. On his eleventh birthday, July 6, 1895, he was already sailing a small sloop. Twenty-seven years later, he was Commodore of the New York Yacht Club. The Forty-fourth Street clubmen saluted not merely his success in navigating his steel-hulled 109-foot auxiliary schooner "Vagrant," but also his methodical attitude toward yachting. While he served in the U. S. Navy during our participation in the World War, he won in 1925, off Newport, both the King's and the Astor Cup, thanks



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not to naval training but to his own industry. In 1927, he commissioned Starling Burgess and the Herreshoffs to design and build "Prestige," 80 feet 6 inches overall, the first of the modern Class M sloops. With her he gained victories which discouraged other yachtsmen: Junius Spencer Morgan, abashed, ordered the "Winward," a frank imitation of the Vanderbilt winner. Meantime, Harold called on Purdy and the Herreshoffs to create the "Vara," a 150-foot-overall steel Diesel yacht, with which he cruised on the rare occasions he did not prefer to sail. Accordingly, when the wealthier sportsmen of the United States gathered, on the 20th of May, 1929, in the rooms of the Broad Street Club to discuss Sir Thomas Lipton's fifth challenge for the America's cup, Harold Vanderbilt rightfully joined those millionaires at their iced coffee.<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to conceive of a more expensive social distinction than participation in the defense of the America's Cup. Only one yacht can be chosen to defend the trophy, yet hopeful capitalists, in syndicates, commission several ships, each costing on occasion a quarter of a million dollars. In his history of the Cup Defense of 1930, Harold Vanderbilt explained that human nature required that apparent extravagance. "Always at the conclusion of any sporting event," he granted, "many changes and alleged betterments are suggested to govern future contests. Some writers objected to the amount of money spent, and suggested that in the future smaller yachts should compete. Cup defenders of the 1930 vintage are very expensive luxuries, but the money spent on them is by no means wasted. Thousands of men were given employment in manufacturing the necessary materials, build-

ing and manning the four yachts. It would help industry if more yachts were now building in this period of depression. I am not suggesting that there are not better ways of spending money, but we all know that it never has been, that it never will be, possible to spend all money in a thoroughly Utopian manner. Sports, amusements and diversions will always claim their share, and it is well that they should. In the opinion of most yachtsmen, it would be beneath the dignity of the America's Cup to allow it to become a trophy for relatively small boat competition. The Cup would lose much of its importance and international significance. It may be one of the frailties of human nature that size and importance have always been brothers. George L. Schuyler, the donor of the Cup, must have sensed this long ago, for he provided in the Deed of Gift that it should be competed for by sloops of at least 65-foot waterline or schooners of at least 80-foot waterline.”<sup>9</sup>

It was in 1851 that the “America” won the Queen's Cup at Cowes, but the House of Vanderbilt did not participate in the defense of the America's Cup until 1893. In that year, the first W. K. Vanderbilt, Frederick W. Vanderbilt, and J. P. Morgan financed the “Colonia,” which the Herreshoff yards designed. The investment proved unfortunate. Another Herreshoff yacht, the “Vigilant,” was selected to defend the cup, and defeated the English contender, Lord Dunraven's “Valkyrie II.” The House was happier in 1896. The “Defender,” which W. K. Vanderbilt and C. Oliver Iselin commissioned from the Herreshoffs, excelled the entries of other syndicates and vanquished the third “Valkyrie.” Later, Lord Dunraven circulated unpleasant and unfounded rumors con-



cerning the ballast of the cup defender. Such tales cannot have surprised the Vanderbilts; the trophy has seldom been pleasantly contested. In 1903 another Vanderbilt, Cornelius III, underwrote, with P. A. B. Widener and William Rockefeller, the "Reliance," which overcame Sir Thomas Lipton's "Shamrock III." The first W. K., occupied no doubt on the turf, made no commitment in 1899, 1901, and 1920, when J. P. Morgan I, C. Oliver Iselin, and lastly, Charles Francis Adams III, prevented Lipton from returning the Cup to England on board the first, second, and fourth "Shamrocks."

In 1930, to meet the fifth challenge of the tea merchant, the optimistic sportsmen of America formed no less than four syndicates. Chandler Hovey and other Boston business men backed "Yankee"; Paul Hammond and his friends endorsed "Whirlwind"; J. P. Morgan II, Junius Spencer Morgan III, Arthur Curtiss James, and Cornelius Vanderbilt III sponsored "Weetamoe." Alas, all those millionaires placed their funds foolishly. Wiser capitalists—Vincent Astor, George F. Baker II, Winthrop W. Aldrich, and George Whitney—answered, with Harold Vanderbilt, for "Enterprise," which W. Starling Burgess planned at the Herreshoff yards. This yacht, as a result of Burgess' studies in aërodynamics, carried a higher, narrower rig than the other entries. And she embodied an innovation, a duraluminum mast. At four bells, on the afternoon of August 27, a launch from the "Nourmahal" of Vincent Astor approached "Vara." "The America's Cup Committee has selected 'Enterprise' to defend the America's Cup"—Butler Duncan and Townsend Irvin delivered the official message. "We will do our best to defend it, and we hope that the Committee will have no cause to



regret its decision," Harold, quite as serious as the occasion demanded, replied.<sup>10</sup>

The railroad scion did not experience undue difficulty in defeating the tea dealer that September. "Enterprise" did not need to sail all seven races off Newport, since she subdued "Shamrock V" in the first four contests. The events did not, apparently, fatigue Harold. After the third victory of his yacht on the thirty-mile course, he hastened to the Newport Casino, where he joined a spirited tennis match.<sup>11</sup> In his history of the Cup Defense, he stressed the features of the defender which allowed him to relax so obviously. Sailing to the windward, he noted that the luff of his headsails (thanks to shorter headstays and less tension there) sagged less to leeward than Lipton's. He also commented on the obvious superiority of the duraluminum mast.

It is evident that this defense of the America's Cup did not tax Harold's estate. In 1931, he held no less than 164,648 shares of New York Central, 43,200 shares of Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, 46,600 shares of Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, 16,000 shares of North Western common, 8,250 shares of North Western preferred, and 10,000 shares of Union Pacific common. These Olympian holdings, however, may be somewhat responsible for this Vanderbilt's shyness. In his account of the building and racing of "Enterprise," Harold gave the unfortunate impression that he wished to keep the great public at a refined distance. He wrote: "Public interest in the America's Cup is such that when a yacht is chosen to defend it, she loses her private character and becomes, for the time being, the property of the American people; she is their representative, their defender. For that reason, they are

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entitled to her history.” Actually, he cannot be termed ungenerous. He has given \$700,000 to Harvard University; \$112,500 to Vanderbilt University. In 1931, he contributed \$50,000 for the relief of unemployment. He conferred, of course, \$25,000 on the Republican Party in 1932.<sup>12</sup>

On the 19th of August, 1933, the millionaire surprised reporters by marrying, in his seventeen-room apartment atop the Hotel Barclay, Miss Gertrude Connaway, the daughter of the late Mrs. W. Barklie Henry. Newspapermen, who familiarly refer to Harold Stirling Vanderbilt as “Mike,” had often hinted that he might wed Miss Eleonora Sears, the Boston sportswoman. Miss Connaway’s father, prominent as a clubman and horseman, died in 1912. Her mother and her stepfather, a member of the banking firm of West & Company, passed away in 1930. At the time she met the forty-nine-year-old railway heir, the thirty-two-year-old Philadelphian was living at the River Club. Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt crossed to Cannes on the “Rex” for their honeymoon. There, they boarded a chartered yacht, the “Argosy.”<sup>13</sup>

It is likely that architecture has never concerned this Vanderbilt. While he requested Treanor and Fatio to design a villa at Lantana, Florida, to replace his earlier winter residence, “El Solano,” which Addison Mizner created on Ocean Boulevard, Palm Beach, he has not inherited his mother’s insistence on châteaux. He has encased portraits of William Henry and the first Willie K. in the rich Renaissance paneling of his suite at the Barclay, but he may have chosen that address because of the New York Central’s investment in the substructure of the hotel.<sup>14</sup>

In 1934, the affluent airplane designer T. O. M. Sopwith



decided to compete for the America's Cup with his "Endeavour." Previously, he had gained experience in yachting by sailing "Shamrock V," which he purchased from the estate of Sir Thomas Lipton. Harold, on this occasion, ordered Starling Burgess to plan "Rainbow," which singularly resembled, thanks to the graceful curve down to the keel in the midsection, the "Shamrock IV" of 1920. Evidently, most sportsmen now placed implicit confidence in his ability to defend the cup. Instead of forming separate syndicates, as they might have done in 1930, Gerard Lambert, Charles Hayden, George E. Roosevelt, Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., Walter P. Chrysler, Ogden L. Mills, H. H. Rogers, E. S. Harkness, Marshall Field III, George F. Baker II, and J. P. Morgan II all placed their funds, as did F. W. Vanderbilt, Alfred G. Vanderbilt II, and W. K. Vanderbilt II, in Burgess' design. During the trials, the "Yankee," with C. F. Adams III at the helm, endangered their investment, but the Cup Defense Committee ultimately selected "Rainbow" as defender.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, on the 17th of September, the representative millionaires of the nation anchored their yachts off Newport, prepared to witness the easy triumph of Vanderbilt over Sopwith. Surely, the Junius Morgans on the "Corsair" never supposed that "Endeavour" could subdue "Rainbow." However, the contender, on the first day of racing, did overcome the defender by two minutes, nine seconds. And on the 18th, the airplane designer elated His Majesty's Ambassador Sir Ronald Lindsay, who watched the contest from the deck of General Cornelius Vanderbilt III's "Winchester," by again vanquishing the railroad director. Harold, who realized that if the Englishman won two more races the America's Cup



would return, as the Queen's Cup, to Cowes, did not on that evening join a tennis match. Happily, Vanderbilt was able, in the end, to save the New York Yacht Club from the disgrace of exporting the trophy. He frustrated Sopwith in the next four events.<sup>16</sup>

"Some yachtsmen feel," Harold had written in his history of the Cup Defense of 1930, "that a protest is unfortunate, is apt to engender bad feeling, and is a thing to be avoided at all costs. Personally, I have never been in sympathy with this viewpoint. In all games, in all important contests, there is always an umpire or referee. In yacht racing the race committee acts as both marker and referee. A protest—the word is ill chosen—is merely an appeal to the referee to render a decision on some question of fact, or to interpret the rules. Hearings on all protests to which I have been a party have always been amicable, and usually productive of good results. If a yachtsman feels that his rights have been infringed, it is better to come out openly and say so, and have the question decided, than to harbor a secret grudge, or spread rumors about an opponent who is never given an opportunity to present his side of the case." Possibly, T. O. M. Sopwith would not unreservedly concur. On the 23rd of September, he claimed the "Rainbow" did not properly respond to luffing, but he discovered that the Race Committee ignored his protest. The judges insisted that he should have hoisted his flag immediately after the incident, and that he should have carried his flag across the finish line. "I am bitterly disappointed with my treatment here," the Englishman complained to reporters. During the sixth, and last, race, each sportsman denounced the other's sailing.<sup>17</sup>

## ENTERS SOCIETY

When the indomitable Sopwith announced his intention of competing once more for the America's Cup in 1937, Harold Vanderbilt revealed that he prized the opportunity to encounter the aggrieved loser. He dispensed with a syndicate and assumed the entire expenditure for a 135-foot yacht which Starling Burgess designed in collaboration with Sparkman & Stevens Company. The Cup Defense Committee respected that enthusiasm, and chose his "Ranger" defender against "Endeavour II." "Ranger," which borrowed the sails of "Enterprise," overpowered the contender in the first four races.<sup>18</sup>

In 1939, Vanderbilt crossed the Atlantic to disappoint Sopwith. With the twelve-meter "Vim" which Sparkman & Stevens planned, he finished first in twelve out of seventeen events in the unfamiliar English waters. And he fairly completed the summer by carrying off a trophy which the airplane designer coveted, the International Challenge Cup.<sup>19</sup>

In the interval, Harold decreased his holdings in the family property. On March 1, 1940, he owned only 90,648 shares of New York Central stock. The Delaware and Hudson Company, which purchased 10 per cent of the railroad's shares in 1933, has also withdrawn from Central. Today, the holding company for the Delaware & Hudson Railroad possesses no more than 304,600 shares of the disappointing equity.<sup>20</sup>





## *Part Five*

### THE SEVENTY-SEVEN MILLIONS OF FREDERICK W. VANDERBILT

“FRED VANDERBILT’S job,” William R. Mead informed his partner C. F. McKim, who was journeying down the Nile, early in 1896, “has met with serious delay, but he has acted very nicely about it. . . . When we came to tear the old house apart, it was found to be in as bad a condition as the annex—no strength to the mortar, walls out of plumb, etc.; in fact, so bad that it seemed foolish to attempt to build anything on it. Vanderbilt hesitated on the ground that if he had not thought there was something to save in the old building, he would not have built on these lines. As matters now stand, we are rearranging the center on virtually the same lines, but with certain changes in plan, and keeping the exterior just as you left it. There has been a good deal of fight to do this, because when it was found the old house had to come down, Mrs. Vanderbilt kicked over the traces, and was disposed to build an English house, as she called it.”<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1895, Frederick William Vanderbilt purchased the 600-acre estate of the late Walter Langdon at Hyde Park on the Hudson. But this Vanderbilt, unlike his older brother,

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the first Willie K., derived no pleasure from exquisite architecture. Upon inspecting the forty-room Langdon manor, he considered remodeling rather than rebuilding. Only after deliberation did he authorize McKim, Mead & White to raze the decaying mansion and erect on the site a Corinthian residence. While he insisted on costly interiors for his country seat, he had no intention of competing in villas with his relations. His home was vulgar, rather than magnificent. Apparently, he elected to live at Hyde Park because of the extravagant view he gained of the Hudson. Near by, families of older blood, such as the Astors and the Crugers, occupied frankly romantic manses. Frederick Vanderbilt, however, preferred an academic summer palace to any Gothic cottage. He may have traveled to Hyde Park either by yacht or by personal Wagner palace car (in after years on board his private Pullman car "Vashta"), yet he always sought shelter from the rays of genuine splendor.<sup>2</sup>

At Newport, he commissioned Peabody & Stearns to design a wholesome cottage. Although he opened that home, "Rough Point," in the summer of 1891 with a fête which burned 10,000 candlepower in lights, he may have given the superb affair to delight his wife. On that evening, he illuminated with calcium the rustic bridge opposite his manor. Then, after strewing 2,000 roses along the stairways leading to his parlors, he offered the elegant whom he invited music from a Swiss organ and from Hungarian and Casino bands. Fifteen years later, he admitted that he tired of the constant candlepower of the *affaires de luxe* of the resort. He sold "Rough Point" to the tinsplate magnate William B. Leeds for

\$500,000. Thenceforward, he whiled the days he did not spend in New York or Hyde Park at a camp created by Japanese architects at Upper Saint Regis in the Adirondacks, or at an estate preferred by Mrs. Vanderbilt at Bar Harbor.<sup>3</sup>

Until 1914, the reticent Frederick continued to live in the undistinguished house at Fifth Avenue and Fortieth Street which he received from William Henry. After leasing that corner to Arnold, Constable & Company, he rented for a period the residence of Oakleigh Thorne at Park Avenue and Seventy-third Street. In 1917, he acquired the discreet palace at 1025 Fifth Avenue which Ogden Codman planned for General Lloyd S. Brice.<sup>4</sup>

Even in yachts, Frederick did not rival the two Willie K's. His "Conqueror," imported from England in 1891, cost only \$75,000. If she excited, momentarily, notoriety, she did so merely because she entered American waters duty-free, despite the protest of the government. In 1904, he ordered in Scotland the 255-foot "Warrior." She represented an extraordinary investment for her owner: \$500,000. But after she grounded, in 1914, off the coast of Colombia, she joined the fleet of Harry Payne Whitney. Not until 1924 did Frederick command Cox and Stevens to create at the Krupp Works at Kiel the 158-foot Diesel yacht, the "Vedette." This ship, whose fittings came from Parisian art rooms, did involve \$450,000. However, she continued to fly Frederick's purple and white pennant even after sinking at her moorings at Brooklyn, one morning in 1925.<sup>5</sup>

But if Frederick never reveled openly in architecture, and considered economy in yachts, he did gratify one inclination:



philanthropy. He may have developed this taste, rarely an addiction in a Vanderbilt, while he was a student at New Haven. He was, indeed, the only one of the four brothers to enjoy a college education; he graduated from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1878. His wife may have stimulated this predilection. He married, in 1880, Louise Anthony, who had been divorced from Alfred, the son of Mrs. Daniel Torrance, William Henry Vanderbilt's sister. During the years she lived at "Rough Point," she rented a hall each Thanksgiving in which she gave a banquet to 500 newsboys and messengers. She devoted much of her personal income to the Saint Anthony Home for Working Girls, and she joined Fred in giving \$100,000 to the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine.<sup>6</sup>

The Vanderbilt brothers, in 1886, donated \$250,000 toward the erection of a clinic at Columbia University in memory of William Henry. Three years later, they purchased for the University the lot bordered by Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth Streets and Ninth and Tenth Avenues. They then presented \$350,000 for the enlargement of their hospital, \$115,000 as an endowment. Forty years after his first gift to Columbia, Frederick, along with his nephew Harold, subscribed \$500,000 for the rebuilding of the Vanderbilt Clinic. And in 1937, he pledged \$350,000 more.<sup>7</sup>

To Yale, he was naturally more attentive. He furnished \$60,000 to house the Saint Anthony Society, and he sponsored a business course with \$100,000. Altogether, he gave more than \$1,000,000 for the construction of dormitories. He bestowed \$500,000 on Vanderbilt University, but he did not end his philanthropies in colleges. He animated the

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Y.M.C.A. with \$100,000. In 1931,<sup>8</sup> like Harold, he donated \$50,000 for the relief of unemployment.

Louise Vanderbilt, whom the family called Aunt Lulu, died in the Ritz Hotel in Paris in 1926. In her will, the childless, charitable wife of Uncle Fred named the Saint Anthony Home for Working Girls the beneficiary of a \$300,000 trust fund.<sup>9</sup>

Meantime, her husband continued to manage his money with tranquil acumen. At the turn of the century, he had invested, in company with J. B. Haggin, D. O. Mills, Henry C. Frick, J. P. Morgan, H. McK. Twombly, and the estate of George Hearst, in the Cerro de Pasco copper mines. Evidently Frederick, who inherited merely \$10,000,000 in 1885, drew attractive dividends from that and other holdings. On his revenues in 1923, he paid a Federal income tax of \$800,-129.60. In the next year, he paid but \$792,896.00, yet he ranked seventh in the list of the nation's assessed. Only John D. Rockefeller II, Henry Ford, Andrew W. Mellon, Payne Whitney, E. S. Harkness, and R. B. Mellon contributed more than he.<sup>10</sup> \*

\* According to *The New York Times* of September 6, 1925, these twenty-five capitalists paid the greatest taxes on income received in 1924: John D. Rockefeller II paid \$6,277,669.00; Henry Ford, \$2,608,-806.00; A. W. Mellon, \$1,882,609.00; Payne Whitney, \$1,686,626.00; E. S. Harkness, \$1,531,708.00; R. B. Mellon, \$1,180,699.00; F. W. Vanderbilt, \$792,896.00; George F. Baker I, \$792,076.00; Thomas Fortune Ryan, \$791,851.00; George F. Baker II, \$783,406.00; E. J. Berwind, \$722,103.00; Vincent Astor, \$642,600.00; James B. Duke, \$641,250.00; Cyrus H. K. Curtis, \$583,872.00; J. P. Morgan II, \$574,379.00; H. Foster, \$569,994.00; Eldredge R. Johnson, \$542,627.00; George A. Hancock, \$543,726.00; H. R. Timken, \$540,336.00; A. W. Cutten, \$540,000; A. C. James, \$521,388.00; T. W. Lamont, \$480,000; Felix M. Warburg, \$471,404.00; C. W. Nash, \$459,776.00; Mortimer L. Schiff, \$455,440.00.



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He attended with regularity, if without spontaneity, the annual meetings of railways. On his eighty-first birthday, October 2, 1937, he had served fifty-six years on the board of the Chicago & North Western; sixty-one years on the board of the New York Central. Ever a dormant stockholder, he held nonetheless, in 1931, 21,539 shares of New York Central, 43,200 shares of Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, 20,000 shares of Lackawanna, 12,000 shares of North Western common, and 10,000 shares of North Western preferred.

On the 29th of June, 1938, Frederick expired at the very moment his relations in Newport counted on entertaining the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden. Nevertheless, General and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt III and Mrs. H. McK. Twombly graciously canceled the fêtes they had planned in their villas. At the funeral at 1025 Fifth Avenue, they may have mused, permissibly, on how much the departed had accumulated. Soon after they returned, in their maroon Rolls Royces, from their journey to the Tomb, they learned that he disposed in this fashion of his estate: To Mrs. James L. Van Alen, Lulu's niece, the former Margaret Louise Post, he bequeathed 1025 Fifth Avenue, the site and building of Arnold, Constable & Company, and the property at Hyde Park, with the exception of the lodge, Wales Place, which he devised, along with \$250,000, to his superintendent. To Mrs. Van Alen, he gave his yachts, his motor cars, and his jewelry. To her, too, he transmitted twenty-five shares in trust of the residuary 100-share estate of which he named the United States Trust Company executor. In the event that she did not dispose of her interest by will, he stipulated that her principal should pass to her two sons; in the event that they were



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not then living, in equal proportions to Vanderbilt University and Sheffield Scientific School. To Vanderbilt University, he bequeathed outright fifteen shares; to Sheffield Scientific School, twenty shares. Such were the principal provisions of the testament.

To accountants, after his decease, Frederick gradually revealed the subtle achievement of his career. He amassed, during his eighty-one-odd years, no less than \$72,588,284.00, which increased, within fifteen months after his passing, to \$76,838,530.00! He had beautifully diversified his portfolio. In tobacco, he held 8,000 shares of American Tobacco common; 10,500 shares of American Tobacco "B." In banking, he held 3,500 shares of Guaranty Trust; 8,000 shares of Irving Trust. In oil, he held 26,114 shares of Standard Oil of California. In rails, he hopefully held 7,000 shares of Baltimore & Ohio common, 20,000 shares of North Western common, 10,000 shares of North Western preferred, 20,000 shares of Lackawanna, 3,000 shares of Erie, 43,200 shares of Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, and 53,750 shares of New York Central, but he balanced that commitment with investments in mining. He held 9,568 shares of Homestake, 25,000 shares of Cerro de Pasco common. Finally, he indulged in 17,000 shares of Bethlehem Steel common, and in 25,000 shares of Pullman. Apparently, he did not worry over income-tax problems: he possessed nearly \$49,000,000 of nontaxable New York City and State bonds. In his checking account at the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, this Vanderbilt maintained a balance of over \$3,000,000.

The assessments on the Frederick Vanderbilt fortune totaled \$41,272,109.00, of which the Federal Government re-

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ceived \$30,372,109.00; New York State, \$10,900,000.00. He who in death was thus shorn had, in life, scrupulously denied himself Rolls Royces. Although he held title to eight motor cars, his only Rolls dated from 1918.<sup>11</sup>

In the summer of 1939, Father Divine sought in vain to purchase the Hyde Park manor as a haven for his followers. He appealed to President Roosevelt for permission to dwell on that bank of the Hudson, but Mrs. Van Alen, through her attorneys, declined to dispose of her inheritance. Recently, she presented the estate to the government as a national park.

## *Part Six*

### “BILTMORE,” THE VANDERBILT BARONY

ON Christmas Eve, 1895, the personal Wagner palace cars of many members of the House of Vanderbilt rolled into sidings near Asheville, North Carolina. Dr. and Mrs. William Seward Webb, their children and domestics, Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II, their children and domestics, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick William Vanderbilt, and their domestics, Mrs. William Henry Vanderbilt, and her domestics, Mr. William Kissam Vanderbilt I, and his domestics, then alighted and entered carriages which conveyed them to “Biltmore,” the domain of George Washington Vanderbilt II.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after he inherited \$10,000,000 and his father's palace at 640 Fifth Avenue, this Vanderbilt conceived the idea of lavishing his wealth upon a principality complete with castle. In 1888, he imagined, upon visiting Asheville, a château in the forests near Mount Pisgah. Two years later, he asked Richard M. Hunt to realize that vision in Indiana limestone. Hunt, who divined that his client possessed the architectural appetite of Louis II of Bavaria, sketched yet another Château de Blois. Vanderbilt, enchanted with the design, built a branch railroad to the site to expedite the con-



struction. Soon Frederick Olmsted, the creator of Central Park, was planning grandiose gardens on the border of 97,000 acres of forest land.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that the splendor of this country seat enervated George's relatives. While 660 Fifth Avenue remained the most graceful residence of the House of Vanderbilt, "Biltmore" was undeniably the only barony in the family. In costly arrogance, the manor undid the pretension of any home in New York or Newport. The roof, the largest in the United States, covered not only forty master bedrooms, but also the requisite state chambers. In the Court of Palms, the capitalist might escape tedium by gazing at the statuary of Karl Bitter; in the Oak Drawing Room, by inspecting a rare collection of engravings; in the Banqueting Hall, by staring at five Gobelins tapestries; in the Print Room, by examining the etchings of Dürer, or by toying with the chess set of Napoléon I; in the Tapestry Gallery, by gloating over rich Flemish hangings. And in the Library, Vanderbilt might browse among 250,000 volumes. With tutors, he had made a serious study of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Ancient and Modern Greek. Evidently he counted on those literatures to relieve the solitude of his acres.<sup>3</sup>

Before he withdrew to his box, George had considered broadening the cultural opportunities of the people of New York City. Following the precedent of Andrew Carnegie, he financed the Thirteenth Street Branch of the Free Circulating Library. Later, he turned his attention to the Teachers' College. "I should like to give this association the nucleus of a library," he proposed.

"But we don't need one," Miss Grace Dodge, the acting

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president, contested. “We need first some brains to develop this work, to place it on a strong footing, and to teach people how to use a Library.”

“Here is your brain money for one or two years.” George forwarded a check for \$10,000. “Now find the brains.” As a further philanthropy, he purchased the Bloomingdale Asylum Property for Columbia University at a cost of \$100,000. And in 1892, he donated an Art Gallery, a practical reproduction of the Galerie Georges Petit, to the American Fine Arts Society.<sup>4</sup>

At “Biltmore,” Vanderbilt promoted scientific forestry and farming. “He employs more men than I have in my charge”—Secretary of Agriculture Morton envied the capitalist for hiring Gifford Pinchot as forester. “He is also spending more money than Congress appropriates for this Department,” the Secretary remembered. “People talk about the enormous amount of money that Mr. Vanderbilt is spending to gratify his pride and appetite. They do not comprehend the first letter in the alphabet of his ambition.” Other personalities than Morton prized the duchy. Paul Leicester Ford, the sound biographer of Franklin, often visited George’s seat.<sup>5</sup>

Gradually, the millionaire increased the territory of his realm to 130,000 acres. Thoughtfully, he provided a village for his hundreds of employees, a village which included not only schools and shops, but even a hospital and a church. The master of “Biltmore” did not allow dogs or henroosts in the homes of his subjects, but he contented his dependents, for only once did the choir in his private chapel strike. At Christmas, Vanderbilt delighted his retainers with a Monster Ball.<sup>6</sup>



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Wisely, he divided his principality into three departments, each under a general manager. To his director of forestry, he intrusted the betterment of the timber of his woodlands; to his director of agriculture, the breeding of Jerseys and Berkshires, and the importation of choice European hogs; to his director of landscaping, the maintenance of his macadamized pleasure roads, and the care of the 11,000,000 specimens in his arboretum.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Vanderbilt had invited a young girl to reign with him over his domain. On the 2nd of June, 1898, George married in Paris Miss Edith Stuyvesant Dresser, the daughter of the late Captain Warren Dresser of the United States Army, the granddaughter of the late Daniel LeRoy of New York, and the direct descendant of Peter Stuyvesant. Although our Ambassador, General Horace Porter, joined Chauncey M. Depew, the Count and Countess Boni de Castellane, and the Duchess of Marlborough at the ceremony, the sensitive capitalist permitted only six clusters of roses at the American Church.<sup>8</sup>

The railway heir did not, after his marriage, withdraw altogether from the elegant world beyond the boundaries of "Biltmore." For a time, he defended the dignity of Fifth Avenue. If he yielded to the authority of the city and removed from his New York residence a *porte-cochère* which barred pedestrians from the sidewalk, he underwent, on the other hand, the expense of building two houses at Numbers 645 and 647 in order to prevent the erection of a skyscraper opposite his father's palace. Eventually, to be sure, he gratified the childlike ambition of Henry C. Frick. In 1904, he leased 640 Fifth Avenue to the coke magnate for the period of ten



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years. But he soon insisted on other addresses. On his fifty-first birthday, November 14, 1913, he possessed not only a cottage at Bar Harbor, but also a winter home in Washington: 1612 K Street, once the mansion of Senator Matthew Quay.<sup>9</sup>

In Washington, on the 6th of March, 1914, George Vanderbilt, after rallying from an operation for appendicitis, succumbed to a heart attack. On the next morning, *The New York Times* claimed that his fortune totaled \$50,000,000. Unfortunately, the newspaper overestimated his holdings. His assets, exclusive of “Biltmore,” of his houses at Bar Harbor and at Washington, and of his untouchable \$5,000,000 trust fund, amounted to merely \$1,314,852.45! His net estate, after deductions of \$385,111.47, including \$312,047.86 in debts, declined to \$929,740.98. After his architectural indulgence, the former millionaire owned no Central, no Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, no Lackawanna, and no North Western. This Vanderbilt, on the day he died, held title to corporate stocks and bonds worth but \$11,125.00.

To his only child, his daughter Cornelia, then fourteen years of age, he bequeathed the \$5,000,000 he inherited from William Henry. To his wife, he devised \$1,000,000 in insurance, reduced by a mortgage to \$640,822.61, and his cottage at Bar Harbor, his home at 1612 K Street, and “Biltmore.”

Edith Vanderbilt soon disposed of all except 12,500 acres of the North Carolina estate; she deeded her forests as a National Park. Possibly, she admired the existence, uncomplicated by castles, of her sisters Mrs. John Nicholas Brown, Mrs. George Merrill, and the Vicomtesse Romain d'Osmoy. In 1925, she chose a second husband, who apparently did not

covet palaces: Peter Goelet Gerry, U. S. Senator from Rhode Island. Upon the demolition of the Quay mansion, she shared with the Senator a modest town house in Washington. Then, in 1930, she solved the problem of "Biltmore" by opening the domain to the public. Thereafter, tourists to Asheville who applied at the Chamber of Commerce could inspect the glorious château by paying an admission fee.<sup>10</sup>

Cornelia, in 1924, wedded the Hon. John Francis Amherst Cecil, First Secretary of the British Legation in Washington. After bearing the diplomat two sons, she separated from him in 1934. She granted Cecil the custody of her children, but she burdened him with the title of general manager of "Biltmore." Since, she has traveled to Switzerland, where she met the artist Guy Baer. Unhappily, when the painter's wife filed suit for divorce in 1938, she named as corespondent the great-granddaughter of Commodore Vanderbilt.<sup>11</sup>

## Part Seven

### THE DAUGHTERS OF WILLIAM H. VANDERBILT

ONCE married, women born to the name of Vanderbilt welcome obscurity as a relief from the constant calcium of their childhood. Thus, the Commodore's daughters, after contesting his will, vanished from history along with their descendants. One of Mrs. Torrance's children wedded Meredith Howland, a gentleman recognized on Murray Hill, and one of Mrs. Thorn's grandchildren wedded Alexander Baring, a member of the great banking house, but neither woman, despite the brilliance of the alliance, was sincerely conspicuous.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Elliott Fitch Shepard, the former Margaret Louisa Vanderbilt, oldest daughter of William Henry, utterly escaped publicity, although she inherited, like Frederick, George, and her three sisters, the sum of \$10,000,000 from her father. Her husband, the son of Fitch Shepard, a Jamestown, New York, banker, forsook the law for journalism in 1888 when he purchased the *Mail and Express* from Cyrus Field. Apparently, however, he never intended to compete with Joseph Pulitzer or James Gordon Bennett II, for he died, in 1893, at the age of fifty-eight, without having troubled



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their circulation. His widow, after disposing of her share in the northern half of the Triple Mansion to her sister Mrs. Sloane, retired to an apartment house at 998 Fifth Avenue. Obviously, she disliked the taste of architectural grandeur. Long before she passed away, at the age of seventy-nine in 1924, she had sold both her estate at Scarborough and her cottage at Bar Harbor. To her four children: Elliott Fitch Shepard, Jr.; Maria Louisa, the wife of William Jay Schiefelin, Jr.; Edith, the wife of Ernesto Fabbri; and Alice, the wife of Dave Hennen Morris, she bequeathed the \$5,000,000 trust fund of which she had enjoyed the income.<sup>2</sup>

Emily Thorn Vanderbilt, the second daughter of William Henry, has usually eluded notice. Her first husband, William Douglas Sloane, the third son of the carpet magnate William Sloane, was unremarkable, although charitable. In 1886, he donated \$200,000 for a Maternity Hospital at Columbia University; she collaborated by presenting \$250,000 for the enlargement of the building. None of the children of Sloane, who died in 1915 at the age of seventy-one, have been poignantly prominent. Florence, once Mrs. James A. Burden, Jr., has just wedded Richard Tobin. Edith married the attorney John Henry Hammond. Neither Lilian, the wife of W. B. Osgood Field, nor Malcolm Douglas Sloane, nor William Douglas Sloane, Jr., is now living.

In 1920, Emily chose a second husband, Henry White, who had served as U. S. Ambassador to France and Italy. (His first wife's sister-in-law Anne Rutherford wedded the first Willie K. in 1903.) She shared with the polite diplomat a palace at Washington, a villa at Lenox, and a residence on Fifth Avenue. Mrs. White, in 1925, sold the northern half of

the Vanderbilt Triple Mansion to real-estate operators who contemplated an office building, but she purchased immediately thereafter Number 854 Fifth Avenue, the discreet home of the late Governor of Rhode Island, R. Livingston Beekman. In insisting, in an era of apartment towers, on the dignity of a town house, this daughter of William Henry has proved her taste for stately, if not magnificent, living. At moments, she has moved passengers on the Fifth Avenue busses with the fatal luxury of her motor car: she possesses one of the exquisite maroon Rolls Royces of the Vanderbilt fleet. A frail octogenarian today, Mrs. White seldom moves in society. As long ago as 1927, she and Mrs. Twombly disposed of their parterre box at the Opera to H. E. Manville. Her second consort survived that sale but a few months.<sup>3</sup>

Utterly untroubled, it would seem, by either motor cars, Diesel yachts, or loges at the Metropolitan, Mrs. White's grandson John Henry Hammond, Jr., has found his only excitement in the catastrophes of hot jazz. In 1933, while American Recording Director for Columbia Records, he discovered Benny Goodman. Since, he has promoted other jazzmen, especially Count Basie. Orchestra leaders of any distinction realize that Hammond is discerning. "If a guy who didn't know anything said the things John says, people wouldn't get sore," Goodman once remarked. "They get sore at John."<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly, the former Florence Adèle Vanderbilt, third daughter of William Henry, deprived herself of magnificence for many years. Although her husband served as director of fifty-nine corporations, including, of course, the New York Central, the North Western,



and the Lackawanna, in addition to the Erie, the Reading, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and the New Haven, she permitted herself only a wholesome cottage at Newport (by the same architects and on the same scale as her brother Frederick's), a modest country seat at Madison, New Jersey (designed, it is true, by McKim, Mead & White), and a convenient mansion at 684 Fifth Avenue (which she inherited from her father). Twombly made what must have been a happy commitment in Cerro de Pasco, but he believed in anonymous charity. Accordingly, even though he provided summer outings on the Hudson for over 400,000 of the very poor, he remained, during his lifetime, their nameless benefactor. For a period, upon the death of one of their daughters, and upon the drowning of their only son, the Twomblys withdrew altogether from society.<sup>5</sup>

It is in more modern times that Mrs. Twombly has quickened the family myth by insisting, unlike her sisters, on architectural and other glories. In 1926, she gave, as did Mrs. White, \$100,000 to Vanderbilt University. But in that year, after selling 684 Fifth Avenue to John D. Rockefeller II, Mrs. Twombly requested Warren & Wetmore, the architects of the Grand Central Station and the Ambassador and Ritz Carlton Hotels, to design a noble palace at 1 East Seventy-first Street. Surely, only an unkind critic of eclectic architecture would inquire, on gazing at the splendor of her seventy-room mansion, what *chef-d'œuvre* of the Italian Renaissance Warren & Wetmore remembered as they drew the plans. For the mistress of 1 East Seventy-first Street requires, in addition to a retinue of maroon-clad domestics, a cavalcade of maroon Rolls Royces.<sup>6</sup>



Mirobolant, the undying chef of *Pendennis*, was accustomed to improvise on the piano before composing menus. Music, it would seem, has never inspired Joseph Donon, the master of Mrs. Twombly's kitchens. But his salary has been estimated at \$25,000 the year, and his genius has been recognized by Lucius Beebe. "M. Donon," according to the columnist of the *Herald Tribune*, "lives the ordered existence of a man of substantial means. At Newport . . . he has a separate villa of his own, his own staff of personal servants, and his own sailing boat, in which he enjoys fishing during the summer season in the reaches of Buzzard's Bay. When Mrs. Twombly entertains, and she does it frequently, there is no nonsense about economy, and the tradesman's vans are days in advance, delivering hodsful of foie gras and whole greenhouses of orchids. There are seldom fewer than twenty for dinner, and M. Donon records that the regular daily delivery of lobsters never runs under fifty pounds."

Visitors to Mrs. Twombly's country seat at Madison travel on a private train of the Lackawanna. It is distressing to relate that neither of her children (Florence Adèle Twombly, who wedded William A. M. Burden, and Ruth Vanderbilt Twombly, who has not married) has demanded such pomp in all the thirty years that have passed since their father's death.

Eliza Osgood Vanderbilt, the fourth daughter of William Henry, accepted anonymity on marrying Dr. William Seward Webb, the son of General James Watson Webb; for her husband, rather than she, received the attentions of the press. Foolishly, her father disapproved her choice. In his will, he stipulated that Eliza should have no say in the management

of her inheritance before she reached the age of thirty. Webb, however, was intelligent. On his graduation from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, he had studied medicine in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin. Now he gracefully founded the brokerage house of W. S. Webb & Company. Eventually, he secured the presidency of the Wagner Palace Car Company, an office he held until Wagner merged with Pullman. Although he was long a board member of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, he preferred, like his brother Creighton Webb, elegance to affairs. While he never developed the taste for architecture common to Vanderbilts, he did maintain Shelburne Farms, a box of 3,500 acres near Burlington, Vermont.<sup>7</sup>

Twice, Webb welcomed members of the Coaching Club to his Vermont estate. On their first visit, the whips rode to Rutland on board his private car "Elsmere," and tooled their drags only from the railroad station to the villa. Later, the sportsmen covered by coach the entire distance from New York City to Middlebury, Vermont. Thence they journeyed by private train to the manor. On this occasion, the thoughtful host not only transported the clubmen's baggage in "Elsmere," but even provided New York Central horse cars for the animals fatigued at the various stages. Such attentions touched the coachmen, accustomed though they were to traveling on "Idle Hour," the personal Wagner palace car of the first Willie K.<sup>8</sup>

At Shelburne Farms, Webb at one time supported the largest hackney stud in the United States. Yet, he did not breed carelessly. Of the 350 pounds of butter which his 90 cows would weekly produce, he would sell 250 to the com-

missaries of clubs and to the dining-car service of the New York Central. Thus, he contributed to the comfort of passengers on board the crack flyer of the Vanderbilt roads, the Twentieth Century.<sup>9</sup>

On selling 680 Fifth Avenue, the house which Eliza inherited from William Henry, the Webbs moved first to Park Avenue and Seventy-ninth Street, and then to 270 Park Avenue. In winter, the couple resided at Dunbar Road, Palm Beach. But both Seward and his wife passed away at Shelburne Farms; he in 1926 at the age of seventy-five; she in 1936 at the age of seventy-six. Their children, save for J. Watson Webb, the poloist husband of Electra Havemeyer, have avoided distinction. W. Seward Webb II, Vanderbilt Webb, and Frederica Webb, who married first Ralph Pulitzer, and second Cyril H. Jones of Boston, are, although of the blood, obscure.





# *Part Eight*

## THE CHÂTEAUX AND THE CHILDREN OF CORNELIUS VANDERBILT II

### I

BISHOP POTTER, unable to attend, had sent his card; but others, quite as Fifth-Avenuable, were present. On the afternoon of January 14, 1888, Lispenard Stewart, Ogden Mills, and Ward McAllister were among the fashionables who crowded the parlors of the château of Cornelius Vanderbilt II. There, half-hidden by potted palms, the elegant discovered two pianos placed between the folding doors which, on less splendid days, separated the two withdrawing-rooms of Cornelius' castle. On those instruments, Master Josef Hofmann and his father diverted the fortunate guests with selections from Mendelssohn and Chopin. At six o'clock, domestics clad in the well-known maroon served the music-lovers a light luncheon, a collation which the Vanderbilt children interrupted to press young Hofmann to return soon.<sup>1</sup>

Alas, it is probable that sobriety, rather than discernment, dictated Cornelius' and Alice's taste in pianists. The oldest son of William Henry met his wife, not in society, but at Sunday school. On her arrival in New York, Alice, the daughter of the one-time Cincinnati attorney Abraham Evan

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Gwynne, passed her Sabbath mornings as instructress to the children of Saint Bartholomew's Parish. Having inherited two million more from William Henry than the mundane Willie K., Cornelius not unnaturally maintained establishments at New York and Newport which compared with 660 Fifth Avenue and "Marble House." Nevertheless, his serious mind sought the satisfactions of philanthropy rather than those of amusement.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Willie K. and Alva, Cornelius and Alice did not decide suddenly on a château. When they moved, in 1878, from 72 Park Avenue, they occupied 742 Fifth Avenue, an unremarkable brownstone dwelling with a stable at 1 West Fifty-seventh Street. For two years, the address satisfied the young couple. Meanwhile, they acquired Numbers 744 and 746 immediately to the north. Finally, in 1880, they requested George B. Post, once a student in the atelier of Richard M. Hunt, to distinguish the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street with a castle. His design, completed in 1882, contented the millionaires for ten years. At length, however, the Vanderbilts determined to dominate the Plaza; in 1892, they asked Post to create an addition to their mansion. Thus, their palace, which already stood on the sites of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street, Numbers 742, 744 and 746 Fifth Avenue, extended, in 1894, to Fifty-eighth Street. The architect, doubtless flattered that his clients had invested all told \$900,000 in the land, paid homage to their commitment. Earlier, in designing the Fifty-seventh Street corner, he had welcomed the inspiration of the Château de Blois. Now, in carrying the immense edifice of pressed brick and light Bed-



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ford stone forward to the Plaza, he planned no mere replica of the monument, but a residence more imposing if less graceful than 660 Fifth Avenue. With the wrought-iron grill gate which defended the driveway and the *porte-cochère* from the public, he bestowed on the castle the terrible dignity which Cornelius and Alice Vanderbilt demanded. The mistress of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street, as the enlarged mansion was known, opened the grill only for funerals, weddings, and other solemnities. In time, Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II may have forgotten how much she owed to the Vanderbilt Ball. Her grand ballroom measured sixty-four by fifty. Her silver plate served 200 persons. Her vestibule, according to one newspaper, was "conspicuously larger than the Supreme Court of the United States." <sup>3</sup>

Cornelius, apparently, frowned on the turf. On a wintry day, he would, if properly enveloped in his celebrated fur-lined overcoat, ride in J. Pierpont Morgan's sleigh through Central Park. But he never manifested the desire to possess either stud or racing stables. Unfortunately, the Borough of Manhattan needlessly offended the millionaire's formality by placing the statue of a woman bathing in the middle of the Plaza. The capitalist's bedroom looked out on her back. "The old boy couldn't stand the 'rear' view," one of his children afterward remembered, "and asked the City Fathers for its removal. But it was no go, so Father changed his room." <sup>4</sup>

For many years, the head of the House of Vanderbilt did not indulge flagrantly in Newport. In 1885, he purchased "The Breakers," Pierre Lorillard's cottage on Ochre Point, for no more than \$400,000. That villa, of brick and wood, with towered gables, satiated his architectural ambitions. But

the manor, in 1892, burned to the ground, and he then considered, of necessity, what architect was capable of the austerity on which he insisted. He decided on Richard M. Hunt. Near by, Hunt had just completed "Ochre Court," the exuberant late-Gothic château of Ogden Goelet. Yet he understood that Cornelius Vanderbilt II sought frigid splendor. Accordingly, he designed a mammoth, almost blatant palazzo in which Henry-Russell Hitchcock has discovered memories of sixteenth-century Genoa.

Although Hunt planned interiors nearly as costly as those of "Marble House," the mistress of "The Breakers" checked artistic impudence. In the Billiard Room, she ordered that a nude in a mural be draped by the painter. Possibly, the architect consoled himself in the cost of the fireplace in the Library: the hearth, including a mantel from Pompeii, represented an investment of \$75,000. And Hunt did insist on a gateway of shameless elegance, almost as delicate as the entrance to "Ochre Court." Perhaps Cornelius permitted such a gate because he possessed at Portsmouth, immediately beyond the boundaries of Newport, an eighteenth-century farmhouse, formerly the retreat of August Belmont. At "Oakland Farm," Vanderbilt fled from the exquisite aspect of architecture.<sup>5</sup>

The Commodore, it is said, once invited Cornelius to travel to Europe. "I'm going myself, and I'll take you if you want to go," the founder of the House proposed.

"And give up my salary?" his grandson protested.

"Well," the older capitalist admitted, "I don't suppose it will go on while you are gone."

"Then," his heir decided, "I guess I'd better stay."<sup>6</sup>

"Cornelius is the brightest of all the Vanderbilts," a very tactful business associate told, on one occasion, a reporter. "He is not so sharp as his grandfather, or so shrewd as his father, but in mental equipoise he is their superior. He is more phlegmatic than either, never allows his passion to sway him, is always courteous, considerate and gentle. Unlike either of his ancestors, he was never heard to use a harsh or impure word, and is known for his blameless upright life." Cornelius' early education, in Staten Island and in the private schools of New York City, prepared him for a position as clerk with the Shoe and Leather Bank. Then, at the age of twenty-two, he entered the banking house of Kissam Brothers. Eventually, in 1865, he became assistant treasurer of the New York and Harlem Railroad, and, on the retirement of his father, he obtained the title of Chairman of the Board of the New York Central and Michigan Central. This Vanderbilt, if we are to believe the unctuous Chauncey M. Depew, was an expert accountant. Furthermore, he took a kindly interest in the family life of earnest workers of the railway. He would sponsor subordinates who arrived early at the office and left late. When traveling with Depew in Europe, he would note the curiosities of the Old World only to recall the tastes of faithful employees. "Now, wouldn't that suit old X, Chauncey?" He would turn to the President of the system. Unfortunately, the achievements of the second Cornelius cannot have been of much moment to railroading. Today, only three Vanderbilt portraits hang in the Board of Directors' Room of the New York Central, those of the Commodore, William Henry, and the first W. K.<sup>7</sup>



Cornelius was anxious, it would seem, for charitable as much as railway renown. After founding, with W. K., George and Frederick, the Vanderbilt Clinic at Columbia, he dedicated \$30,000 to Vanderbilt University, and another \$100,000 to Columbia. Besides being a trustee of the latter institution, he served as a director of both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History. Of the railroad branch of the Y.M.C.A. he declared: "The reading rooms are places both of instruction and pleasure, and the religious and other exercises have a constantly increasing attendance. The men are better acquainted, and a hearty spirit of unity is fostered." He was chosen Chairman of the Finance Committee.<sup>8</sup>

Alice, a daughter of the millionaire, had passed away in childhood. Now, on the evening of May 23, 1892, William Henry Vanderbilt II, Cornelius' oldest son, died of typhoid fever in his father's château. On his twenty-first birthday, December 21, 1891, this Vanderbilt had inherited \$1,000,000 from the estate of his grandfather. Had he lived, he would surely have distinguished himself in expensive athletics, for at Yale he developed a taste for polo. Fifty of his classmates from New Haven, greeted by Chauncey M. Depew at the Grand Central Terminal, attended his funeral at Saint Bartholomew's Church. The Yale men laid a tasteful floral harp before the bier. In memory of the second William Henry, Cornelius presented the University with Vanderbilt Hall, a \$575,000 dormitory. Room No. 31 of the Hall still stands reserved for any Vanderbilt an undergraduate at New Haven.<sup>9</sup>

Cornelius soon recognized that he was subject to the disorder which ended his father's life. In the summer of 1896,

he suffered a severe heart attack. He had regained only partial use of his limbs when, on August 25, his daughter Gertrude married Harry Payne Whitney, son of Cleveland's Secretary of the Navy William Collins Whitney. On the bridal morning at "The Breakers," Nathan Franko led his orchestra not only in the expected compositions by Wagner and Mendelssohn but also in the march, *El Capitán*, by Sousa, the last music to which the millionaire had listened before his stroke. The conductor surprised some of the fashionable by playing "The Star-Spangled Banner." "It is so rarely that an American girl of fortune marries one of her own countrymen"—Franko discussed his independent gesture—"that I thought the selection decidedly in keeping with the occasion." <sup>10</sup>

Within two years after Gertrude's marriage, her father underwent a second stroke. Strenuous devotion to charities may have contributed to his collapse. He was wont to attend, in one day, meetings of the Boards of the Home for Incurables, the Hospital for the Relief of the Ruptured and Crippled, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Sloane Maternity Hospital. Often, on returning home from the New York Central offices, he would consider the affairs of the General Theological Seminary, or of the Board of Domestic and Foreign Missions. And he was ever ready to relieve the anxieties of Saint Bartholomew's Church, which he served as vestryman.

Early in 1899, the capitalist appeared to have recovered from his illness, for he traveled several months on the Continent. Indeed, he may have even entertained the hope of leasing, as he had once in the past, Hatfield House, Herts,

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the Elizabethan estate of the Marquess of Salisbury. Since the millionaire abstained from steam yachting, he did not hesitate at renting palaces for his holidays.

Cornelius, on the morning of the 12th of September, 1899, awoke in New York, not Newport. Although, on the 14th, he was giving a dinner at "The Breakers" in honor of Miss Grant and her fiancé Prince Cantacuzène, he had returned to the city in order to attend meetings of the Harlem, the New York Central and the Wagner Palace Car Companies. Of a sudden, the fifty-five-year-old magnate experienced a paralytic attack. Already writhing when a servant penetrated his bedroom shortly after six, Vanderbilt succumbed to cerebral hemorrhages by nine o'clock. At the time the disorder claimed him, his wife and his daughter Gladys were the only Vanderbilts within the château, but both Willie K. and Frederick entered the sickroom before their brother died. Meanwhile, George hurried south from Bar Harbor; Gertrude, with her brothers Cornelius and Reginald, left Newport for New York; her other brother, Alfred, was traveling in the Orient. At the funeral at Saint Bartholomew's Church, J. Pierpont Morgan served as pallbearer. As the ultimate honor, Bishop Potter, together with Dr. Greer, the rector, read the service.<sup>11</sup>

Not long after the body of the capitalist had been placed in the Staten Island tomb, Dr. Greer wrote an appreciation of the vestryman for the *Outlook*. "Mr. Vanderbilt was a rich man," the clergyman decided, "with the emphasis on the *man*. That, to those who knew him well, and even to those who did not know him well, was his decisive characteristic. The value of his estate, great as it was, was not equal to the



value of him. The man was more than his money. It did not own him; he owned it. Nor did he own it exclusively for himself; he owned it for others. His wealth was regarded by him, not simply as something personal, but as a great and sacred trust which it was his duty to administer, not with a lavish carelessness, but with a wise and discriminating conscientiousness, for the benefit of his fellow-men. That was the way he looked upon business; and while, of course, he added very greatly to his own personal fortune by his wise and conservative business management, it was not the hope of personal enrichment that constituted the principal motive in it. He literally sacrificed his life in the administration of his great trust, for he not only gave money, but what was still better, he gave himself. John Ruskin has somewhere said: *If your fee is first with you, and your work second, then fee is your master, and the lord of all fee, who is the devil; but if your work is first with you, and your fee second, then work is your master, and the lord of all work, who is God.* Mr. Vanderbilt's master was God; he knew and acknowledged no other. He was pre-eminently a religious man; not occasionally and at times, but always. His sense of responsibility to God was always with him. He lived in it, whether in the pew or the office, at a vestry meeting or a railroad meeting. That was the keynote of his character, and made him the man he was, or rather the man he is, for such a life as his does not pass away.”<sup>12</sup>

The fallen Chairman of the New York Central was known to have authorized only one superb affair at Newport. Of the table arrangement, supervised by French artists, the admiring *New York Times* remarked: “The masterpiece was a

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large owl on a perch, the bird being composed of 700 pieces of sugar and almonds. The eyes alone contained 60 pieces. A chain of confections in imitation of silver held the bird to his candied perch, the links of which were as nicely made as the links of a watch chain.”<sup>13</sup>

In his holdings, the departed disappointed neither his family nor his minister. Save for minor commitments in the promissory notes of the Newport Casino and the certificates of beneficial interest of the United States Hotel at Saratoga, he had refrained from sentimental investments. Among other stocks, he held 20,000 shares of New York Central, valued at \$2,700,000; 40,468 shares of Harlem, valued at \$7,688,920; 40,000 shares of Beech Creek, valued at \$2,000,000; 16,250 shares of North Western preferred, valued at \$3,168,750; 7,207 shares of New Haven, valued at \$1,477,435; and 20,000 shares of Wagner Palace Car, valued at \$3,400,000. Among other bonds, he owned \$1,020,000 of West Shore 4's, \$1,000,000 of Beech Creek 4's, \$4,750,000 of Lake Shore Collateral Trust 3½'s, and \$4,750,000 of Michigan Central Collateral Trust 3½'s. In cash, he possessed \$1,231,571. Altogether, the second Cornelius Vanderbilt left nearly \$72,500,000, including \$20,000,000 in real estate.<sup>14</sup>

In disposing of his wealth, the capitalist did not overlook Dr. Greer. In his will, he bequeathed the eulogist \$50,000. Then, after bestowing \$100,000 on Willie K. and \$200,000 on Depew, the millionaire dedicated somewhat less than 2 per cent of his accumulation to charity. He conferred \$50,000 each on Vanderbilt University, Saint Luke's Hospital, and the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church, while he granted \$100,000 to both Yale

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University and the Y.M.C.A. Finally, he lavished \$200,000 in trust and \$200,000 outright on Saint Bartholomew's Church.

Apparently, Cornelius III, the oldest living son, had displeased 1 West Fifty-seventh Street by marrying, as he did, Miss Grace Wilson, for by the terms of his father's testament, he received only \$1,500,000, of which \$1,000,000 was in trust. This unfortunate Cornelius lost the title of Head of the House of Vanderbilt to his younger brother Alfred Gwynne, who inherited, as residuary legatee, about \$42,575,000. Alfred, however, upon obtaining the Commodore's statue and Congressional medal, graciously conciliated Cornelius with \$6,000,000. According to the *New York Tribune* of October 27, 1899, his generosity was voluntary.

Under her husband's instrument, Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt secured not only 1 West Fifty-seventh Street and "The Breakers," but a trust fund of \$7,000,000 as well. Her children, with the exception of Cornelius, shared equally in \$20,000,000 in trust and in \$5,000,000 outright. In addition, Gertrude acquired \$1,000,000 in her own name.

And so, the sons and daughters of Cornelius and Alice Vanderbilt began the twentieth century with attractive individual fortunes. Cornelius Vanderbilt III was worth approximately \$7,500,000; Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, \$36,575,000; Reginald Claypole Vanderbilt, \$6,250,000; Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, \$7,250,000; Gladys Moore Vanderbilt, \$6,250,000.

In his will, the Head of the House donated a famous painting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But "The Horse Fair," by Rosa Bonheur, was not the only artistic memorial



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of Cornelius Vanderbilt II. His widow, in his honor, presented three portals to Saint Bartholomew's.

Meanwhile, a happy reporter discovered that the stocks of the Vanderbilt roads, since the passing of William Henry I, had appreciated no less than \$173,497,000.<sup>15</sup>

## II

Now, on the morning of January 27, 1908, waiters clad in the livery of Louis Sherry gained admittance to the château of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II. Once within 1 West Fifty-seventh Street, the serving men probably paused to admire the Grand Ballroom. There, gifted florists had created mammoth grottoes of pink and mauve orchids. Later in the day, sentimental electricians would illuminate the floral caverns with artificial sunsets suggested no doubt by well-known paintings. Alice, of course, was not idly promoting splendor. She was celebrating the wedding of her daughter Gladys to that hereditary member of the Hungarian House of Magnates, Count Lâszló Széchényi. The groom, whose father had represented Vienna for many years at the Court of Berlin, enjoyed, needless to say, the confidence of Franz Josef. Thus, although Lâszló's great-uncle Count Stephen Széchényi had been conspicuous in the Revolution of 1848, Alice ordered the opening of the Fifty-eighth Street Gates. Gladys' choice was serving with the popular Graf Nasdasy Regiment, Number 9.<sup>1</sup>

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It was in Berlin, at a Ball given by our Ambassador, Charlemagne Tower, that Alice and Gladys Vanderbilt met Lâszló Széchényi. The mother, on that evening, chose the costume of a Court Lady of the Age of Louis XIII; the daughter, the dress of a Roumanian peasant girl. Not long afterward, Countess Emmerich Széchényi, born Countess Alexandra Sztaray-Szirmay, announced the engagement of her son to the Commodore's great-granddaughter. Lâszló's brother, Count Denes, also approved of the spurious peasant. "Miss Vanderbilt," the noble informed reporters, "when she becomes Countess, will be received by the best families in Hungary. She will be the Queen of the Hour."<sup>2</sup>

Sherry's men, on the morning of the 27th, served this breakfast in the Grand Salon, the Ballroom, and the Moorish Room of the château:

Hors-d'œuvre Florentine  
Homard Royal  
Noisette d'Agneau Monte Carlo  
Pommes de Terre Nouvelles Rissolées  
Chaudfroid de Jambon Dandolo  
Salade Anita  
Macédoine de Fruits  
Café

And yet, certain of the Vanderbilt guests may have tarried over the bridal gifts. The presents included a rope of pearls from the Duchess of Marlborough, a long chain of diamonds from Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Claypole Vanderbilt, a necklace of pearls and diamonds from Mr. and Mrs. Frederick William Vanderbilt, a stomacher of sapphires and diamonds

from Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, a neckpiece and stomacher of turquoises and diamonds from Mrs. William Douglas Sloane, and a tiara and collar of solitaire diamonds from Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II. Other remembrances awaited the bride in Budapest.<sup>3</sup>

As Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt had courteously relinquished, for the morning of his sister's wedding, his rights as Head of the House, his brother Cornelius III gave Gladys away. Up an aisle formed by palms and orchids, the two marched to an improvised altar in the Louis XIV Drawing Room. There, Monsignor Lavelle of Saint Patrick's Cathedral united the Magyar Catholic to the Protestant heiress. Count Lâszló was wearing the uniform of his Hussar regiment; his best man and his ushers were also military. If his bride wore the usual white satin gown, she had, some said, invested \$75,000 in her trousseau.<sup>4</sup>

Since Gladys had studied singing with Jean de Reszke, her mother now provided not only a male quartet and boy's choir from Saint Patrick's, but an orchestra of seventy, led by Nathan Franko. The conductor, who performed fragments from the *Symphonie Pathétique*, the *Fifth Symphony*, and *Tristan*, did not, on this occasion, conclude with "The Star-Spangled Banner." Possibly he sensed that enthusiasm was not correct in the presence of J. Pierpont Morgan and that elaborate lady from the Lake Shore Drive, Mrs. Potter Palmer. Other guests were the British Ambassador, James Bryce, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Baron von Hengenmüller, and the groom's brother, the Austro-Hungarian Minister-Plenipotentiary to the Court of Denmark. Ultimately, the capable attorney Joseph H. Choate proposed a



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toast, a salute which General Horace Porter, once our Ambassador in Paris, naturally seconded.

Perhaps the bride and groom did not appreciate the admirable policing of the wedding until they departed from the château. The crowds on the plaza, scattered by constables, gathered at the Fifty-seventh Street entrance, where a Vanderbilt brougham was waiting. Meantime Lâszló and Gladys deceived the throngs by entering a motor car which Alfred had driven to the Fifty-eighth Street gates. Unmolested by the mob, the newlyweds reached the Grand Central Terminal, where they boarded, en route for Newport, Alfred's private car "The Wayfarer."<sup>5</sup>

In Hungary, Gladys was competent. After tactfully learning Magyar songs and dances, she interested her husband and other nobles in stock speculations. In time, William Henry's granddaughter controlled both the Budapest Street Railways and the Schlick Iron Works. During the World War, the heiress graciously turned her town house on the Andrâssy-Ut into an orphan asylum. Lâszló, meanwhile, was serving as Aide-de-Camp to the Commander of the First Austro-Hungarian Army. However, A. Mitchell Palmer, the U. S. Custodian of Alien Property, respected neither the capabilities nor the philanthropies of Countess Széchényi. Late in 1918, the officious agent appropriated her American investments, then estimated at \$9,000,000. Fortunately, while waiting for the United States to return her securities, Gladys could rely on the income from her Hungarian holdings.<sup>6</sup>

Lâszló, from 1921 to 1933, served as Minister to Washington. Except for opposing the entrance of Count Karolyi into the United States, he accomplished little in America to dis-

tinguish his career. Evidently, unlike his great-uncle, he did not welcome dissolving ideas. In 1935, after spending two years at the Court of Saint James, the diplomat resigned from the service. In Budapest, on the 5th of July, 1938, Széchenyi passed away at the age of fifty-nine. His oldest daughter, Cornelia, was the wife of an American, Eugene Bowie Roberts of Maryland. His second daughter, Gladys, was Viscountess Maidstone; her husband was the only son of the Earl and Countess of Winchilsea and Nottingham. His third daughter, Alice, was Countess Bela Hadik; her husband was the son of Count John Hadik, Hungarian Premier under the last Emperor-King, Charles. Only the two youngest daughters, Sylvia and Nadine, remained unallied.<sup>7</sup>

Not long after the death of Lâszló, his widow regained the United States. At Newport, she opened "The Breakers." In New York, she occupied the one-time palace of George Gould at 1 East Sixty-seventh Street. Recently, she has established her residence in Washington. But the Countess has eluded notice at all three addresses. Possibly her husband warned her to distrust publicity. Reporters desperate for copy have discovered only that she wears tub frocks, and that she pronounces her Christian name "Glaydis."

Gladys' mother, however, could not always contain her indignation at the world beyond the gates of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street. One Sunday morning in 1923, the rector of Saint Bartholomew's Church concerned the dowager. Clad, not in the surplice and cassock of an Episcopal priest, but in the gown of a theological student, Dr. Leighton Parks dared to defend from the pulpit the heresy of modernism. Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II did not conceal her displeasure at her



minister's independence of thought. Although she had been a member of Saint Bartholomew's Parish for over fifty years, she attended services henceforth at Saint Thomas' Church.<sup>8</sup>

Cornelius' widow is said never to have entered a shop. She did maintain such careful dinner lists that she won the respect even of the disrespectful Harry Lehr. The fop spoke of the lady whose doorway was so difficult as "Alice of the Breakers." Others, not so near to Fifth Avenue, referred to her as *the* Mrs. Vanderbilt.

The dowager resented for many years the rising taxation of conspicuous New York real estate before, in 1925, she sold 1 West Fifty-seventh Street to promoters. Fortunately, she received no less than \$7,100,000 for the property on which she was annually assessed nearly \$130,000. On moving to 1 East Sixty-seventh Street, the home of the late George Gould, she chose a palace quite as dignified, if less imposing, than her château. Horace Trumbauer, the spiritual heir of Richard M. Hunt, had designed her new dwelling. To be sure, the architect, who usually drew on the gentle inspiration of Ange-Jacques Gabriel, the creator of the Place de la Concorde, did not attain in the Gould mansion the delicacy he later won in the Rice residence. Notwithstanding, he achieved an awful if arrogant solemnity which doubtless put Walter Dent, the impeccable butler of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street, completely at ease.<sup>9</sup>

But if Alice exchanged her château for a palace, she did not willingly part with aging motor cars. She rode stubbornly in a shabby Simplex until her son-in-law Harry Payne Whitney compelled her to sell the pitiful, once elegant jalopy. The willful Whitney, at the wedding of his daughter Barbara,



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dared to snatch the austere widow and hold her before the lens of a camera. Mrs. Vanderbilt may have excused his impudence; nevertheless, she had the photographer's plate smashed.<sup>10</sup>

At last, on the evening of April 22, 1934, Countess László Széchényi and Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney obeyed the final summons to 1 East Sixty-seventh Street. There, consoled by three physicians in attendance at the palace, they watched the passing of their mother at the age of eighty-nine. Their brother Cornelius Vanderbilt III was at that time traveling in the Mediterranean on board the "Viking" of George F. Baker II.<sup>11</sup>

The estate of the departed amounted to \$10,184,587 net. In addition to \$1,247,252 in cash, she held 3,338 shares of New York Central, 3,665 shares of Pittsburgh & Lake Erie (commitments overlooked by the House Committee investigating railroad holdings in 1931), 8,650 shares of Pullman, and over \$600,000 in New York City bonds. Her Rolls Royce dated from 1927.<sup>12</sup>

To Cornelius Vanderbilt III, Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt bequeathed, besides the Gwynne Building at Sixth and Main Streets, Cincinnati, the residuary estate. To Countess László Széchényi she devised not only "The Breakers" and 1 East Sixty-seventh Street, but also nearly two-thirds of the \$7,000,000 trust fund Cornelius II established. To Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, she transmitted the proceeds from the sale of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street: \$7,100,000. To her granddaughters (the daughters of the late Reginald Vanderbilt) Mrs. Lawrence Wise Lowman and Miss Gloria Vanderbilt, she gave the other third of the \$7,000,000 fund. Then after pre-

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sending her grandsons (the sons of the late Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt) William Henry Vanderbilt III, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II, and George Washington Vanderbilt III, with approximately \$167,000 each, she bestowed \$100,000 each on Count László Széchenyi and Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt. To her grandson (the son of Cornelius Vanderbilt III) Cornelius Vanderbilt IV, who had attempted journalism, she left merely a photograph of herself.<sup>13</sup>

Upon the demolition of 1 West Fifty-seventh Street in 1927, Marcus Loew purchased the Moorish and Colonial Rooms for the New Midland Theater in Kansas City. But Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney preserved the Fifty-eighth Street gates for a polite fate. In 1939, she donated the forbidding grillwork to Central Park.<sup>14</sup>

## III

“Why”—Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt III interrogated a careless waiter—“have you given me this table? Let me have that one over there.” The *maître d’hôtel* regretted that a Montenegrin prince had reserved that location. “Then,” Mrs. Vanderbilt decided, “I will have that one in the corner.” Unhappily, an English duchess claimed that reservation. “See”—the disappointed lady now reprimanded the management—“that you give me a better table than the Duchess’ in future. It is only here in France,” she complained to an English friend at her side, “that I am treated this way. In America,

I take a rank something like that of your Princess of Wales.” “Oh,” the cruel Englishman interrupted, “then who is your Queen?” This conversation, collected long ago on the Riviera, only suggests the social altitude of *the* Mrs. Vanderbilt of our day.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the second Cornelius, it will be remembered, indicated by the disposition of his wealth that he disapproved of the third Cornelius' marriage to Miss Grace Wilson. The apparent distaste of the House of Vanderbilt, in that period, for the House of Wilson has never, to our knowledge, been explained. The Georgian R. T. Wilson did, during the Civil War, enter trade by selling blankets to the Confederate Army, but after the conflict, upon removing to New York, he moved in completely correct circles. His oldest daughter Mary wedded Ogden Goelet, whose holdings in Manhattan real estate were second only to those of the House of Astor. His oldest son Orme made Miss Carrie Astor, of the Vanderbilt Ball, happy. Another daughter, Belle, selected the Hon. Michael Henry Herbert, then Second Secretary of the British Embassy in Washington. Under such pleasant circumstances, it would seem natural that Grace Wilson should aspire to a Vanderbilt.

Notwithstanding, the House appears to have frowned early on the alliance. Cornelius III, on graduating from Yale in 1895, departed hurriedly for Europe, some said at the command of his father. When Miss Wilson, on the personal liner of the Ogden Goelets, followed her future husband to the Continent, rumor held that an adviser of Cornelius II sailed to France to return the heir to the United States. Early in 1896, a spokesman for the Vanderbilts informed reporters



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that the scion was “. . . too young to marry, or to think of it.” Thus, it is possible to believe that the great-grandson of the Commodore disregarded all family opinion when he entered the Wilson mansion at 511 Fifth Avenue on the morning of August 3, 1896, and made Miss Grace his wife.<sup>2</sup>

It is, incidentally, unlikely that the coolness of the Vanderbilts concerned the young bride. The Prince of Wales had been careful to cable *his* congratulations. Soon, she was giving enervating entertainments. At Newport, she and her husband leased, for the season of 1902, the cottage of the William Waldorf Astors, “Beaulieu.” There, on the evening of August 25, she staged a truly flagrant *affaire de luxe*. “I have never even dreamt of such luxury,” Grand Duke Boris swore to Harry Lehr. “Is this really America, or have I landed on an enchanted island? Such an outpouring of riches! It is like walking on gold. We have nothing to equal it in Russia. Mr. Lehr, you will have to come over to Europe to show us how you conjure up all these visions of splendor.” For this fête, Grace Vanderbilt transported from New York the entire cast and scenery of a popular musical comedy, *The Wild Rose*. For five days previous to the superb affair, two gangs of carpenters and one shift of electricians labored day and night to construct a temporary theater for the spectacle. The young woman’s guests, never weary, apparently, of inhaling the thousands of American Beauty roses strewn in the parlors of the cottage, named this, the great party of our century, the “Fête des Roses.”<sup>3</sup>

On the Continent, Mrs. Vanderbilt realized other social gains. At Cowes, King Edward VII boarded her husband’s 233-foot steam yacht, the “North Star.” At Travemunde,

Emperor William II and Prince Henry of Prussia dined beneath Cornelius' purple and white pennant. At Saint Petersburg, Grand Duke Boris remembered the donors of the Fête des Roses with a dinner which Grand Duke Vladimir attended. Then the Czarina received the mistress of the "North Star." In the end, Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt realized that reconciliation was essential. According to the newspapers of the period, the dowager consented to meet her daughter-in-law socially on the 13th of October, 1907. Fashionable people everywhere understood that Grace Vanderbilt would inherit the imperium of Mrs. Astor.<sup>4</sup>

Her husband had adopted yachting as a career. On his holidays from Yale, Cornelius had raced a sloop, the "Ilderin." Now, with the "Aurora," the "Elena," and the "Rainbow," he won innumerable trophies on the Sound and off Newport. His syndicate, in 1903, defended the America's Cup. Meantime, he met, of course, the expense of Grace's entertaining. In the summer of 1912, for example, Mrs. Vanderbilt once again constructed a temporary playhouse; on this occasion, she imported, at a cost of \$25,000, *The Merry Widow*, with sixty-five principals and chorus, from the Casino Theater in New York.<sup>5</sup> At an earlier date, the third Cornelius might have invested that much capital in experiments. Not long after his honeymoon, the young millionaire returned to Yale University, where he made a serious study of locomotives. Within three years after his marriage, he planned an engine which the Central put in daily use on the Mohawk Division. His boiler and firebox, cylindrical instead of pear-shaped, reduced repair bills. The inventor estimated, before the American Society of Mechanics and Engineers, that the main-



tenance of his boiler involved the expenditure of only \$2.56 the ton mile, as against \$3.97 the ton mile, the upkeep of the old-type boiler. The Union Pacific and Baltimore and Ohio Railroads encouraged his obvious talent by ordering locomotives based on his design, but the great-grandson of the Commodore soon abandoned his engineering ambitions. It is futile to speculate on the inventions that Cornelius Vanderbilt III might have given the railways, for he eventually performed exclusively for the benefit of the newspapers. Aboard his superb steam yacht, or in the drawing rooms of his New York, Newport, or Long Island homes, he did little which the Vanderbilt Legend did not authorize.<sup>6</sup>

As no son had been born to George Washington Vanderbilt II, 640 Fifth Avenue passed on his death to Cornelius Vanderbilt III. Grace and Cornelius, who had been living at 677 Fifth Avenue, the residence of the late O. H. P. Belmont, moved to their new home on the expiration of Henry Frick's lease. Two years later, the Vanderbilts engaged Horace Trumbauer, the personal architect of the Wideners, to redecorate and modernize the house at a cost of \$500,000.<sup>7</sup>

From the freshened parlors of his grandfather's palace, Cornelius Vanderbilt III followed, with increasing attention, American Preparedness. Having been elected Second Lieutenant in the National Guard as early as 1902, Cornelius now deemed it his duty to enlighten those who believed that we could remain outside the World War. At the end of 1915, Vanderbilt was heading the Military Aviation Committee of the Aero Club of America.<sup>8</sup> A few weeks later, he declared at the sumptuous annual dinner of the Society of the Genesee that New York would be an easy prey for the invader. "An



enemy on our shores could without difficulty place this great city in a position of entire humiliation," the millionaire declaimed. "On the first landing of hostile troops, we would be at the mercy of even a small force in the inadequate protection of our water supply."

At the same meeting, Oswald Garrison Villard, then editor of the *New York Evening Post*, compared the "craze for preparedness" with the "germ of militaristic disease which brought about the moral ruin of Germany."<sup>9</sup> His reasoning, however, cannot have influenced the master of 640 Fifth Avenue. In December, Cornelius, ever mindful of National Defense, led the 22nd Engineers in a review and parade. He and other men of wealth had just indicated their sympathies by presenting \$300,000 for War Relief to the Czarina, the Queen of England, and the President of France.<sup>10</sup>

After serving in Mexico, Vanderbilt finally reached France in 1918 as a Colonel of the Engineers' Regiment of the 27th Division. At the front, and later as an instructor in the United States, he must have exhibited even more than ardor, for in June he attained the rank of Brigadier General and in the following year he received the Distinguished Service Medal.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, while the third Cornelius Vanderbilt gained these military honors, the behavior of his only son, the fourth Cornelius, continued to be troubling.

In his childhood, in the drawing rooms of 677 Fifth Avenue, Cornelius Vanderbilt IV met a selection of millionaires. He examined the enormous gold watch of the senior George F. Baker, and he heard, continually, from Andrew Carnegie that ". . . even a fool can make a million dollars, my boy, but it takes a sage to keep it." Young Neil's grand-

father R. T. Wilson did not approve of certain of his daughter's guests; indeed, the fastidious Southerner maintained that Henry Frick was "not a man to be permitted in the same room with children." The fourth Cornelius, for his part, seems to have found *all* his mother's visitors quite tedious. When Morgan asked his ambition, the tired adolescent answered outright: "I want to be a journalist." "That's awful," the superb banker decided. "A journalist usually winds up by becoming a chronic drunkard, or by remaining a journalist. I do not know which is worse."<sup>12</sup>

Now, when the United States declared war on Germany, Cornelius Vanderbilt IV longed to enlist, although his mother considered such a gesture unnecessary in a nineteen-year-old student at Saint Paul's School. Eventually, he joined the army despite her opposition. Theodore Roosevelt, who had long ago entertained little Neil and his sister Grace with anecdotes of Lincoln, hailed his enthusiasm. "Dear Neily," the rampant ex-President wrote the recruit, "Your dear mother, of whom I am very fond, and whom I greatly respect, and I do not agree about you, and if she is willing, she is to send you this letter. . . . I am *very* proud of you. I sympathize absolutely with the course you are taking; I feel that you are doing exactly what, if you were my son, I would wish you to do. . . . I advise you to stay where you are, perfect yourself in your work, and get abroad with your division, into the fighting line, as soon as you can. I am exceedingly glad that you do not wish to go to Washington to join the slicker-and-slacker brigade. I do not care a rap whether a man is an enlisted man or a major-general; so long as he does his duty, and gets into the war, I'll take off my



hat as quickly to one as to the other. If I had my way, every man would have to serve a year in the ranks before being permitted to try for a commission. . . . Of course, study steadily at every chance, so as to fit yourself for a commission when the time comes. But if I had the command of a division, I'd take you with me far quicker than I would any man who had not done as you have done. I regard you as showing the true American spirit: the spirit of a man. I am proud to greet you as your comrade, an old ex-colonel," Roosevelt signed.<sup>13</sup>

In Flanders and in France Cornelius Vanderbilt IV served four months. Eventually, after being twice gassed, he returned to the United States. At Camp Lewis, Washington, he acted as Chief Wagoner, until as a Second Lieutenant he proceeded to the 152nd Casual Clearing Station, Camp Upton, for discharge. A few months later, on the 29th of April, 1920, he married a Miss Rachel Littleton, of Plandome, Long Island. Inasmuch as Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Astor, Chauncey M. Depew, and Clarence Mackay all attended the ceremony, the groom's parents may have entertained the hope that he would no longer consider journalism. He was, however, adamant. Although his wedding cake, the largest ever baked in America, stood five feet high, he continued reporting. A coachman who had spent twenty-four years in the service of the House of Vanderbilt presented Neil with a leather pocketbook with gold-tipped corners. It was doubtless that wallet which the fourth Cornelius carried on his assignments for *The New York Times*.<sup>14</sup>

It might appear that this Vanderbilt actually intended to live without yachts, without châteaux, and without dry cham-



pagne. He did begin his journalistic career as a twenty-five-dollar-a-week cub for the New York *Herald*. And yet, he bade, at best, an ambiguous farewell to his environment. Simon Michael Bessie, the historian of the tabloid newspapers, tells that the fourth Cornelius, while checking on a reported strike at the Grand Central Station, harassed the Station Master with pointed questions. "Who are you, anyway?" the official demanded. "I am Cornelius Vanderbilt," the young journalist intoned. "And I," proclaimed the Station Master, "am P. T. Barnum."<sup>15</sup>

Withal, Neil was in earnest. After working for William Randolph Hearst, after free-lancing, and after founding a news service, the C-V Syndicate, he was eager to establish a newspaper of his own. Not unnaturally, he determined on a tabloid. In the summer of 1919, Colonel Joseph M. Patterson had invested some of the war-time profits of the Chicago *Tribune* in the New York *Daily News*. Patterson's new holding was almost immediately attractive; within two years the picture paper's circulation exceeded 400,000. In New York, Hearst and Macfadden would soon launch the rival *Mirror* and *Graphic*. Vanderbilt, wary of competing in Manhattan, moved to the West Coast. "I chose Los Angeles," Neil explained, "because it is the fastest-growing city in America. Second, because if a newspaper went in this city, which is the closest newspaper corporation in the country, it could go anywhere. Third, because the Pacific Coast will be to the coming generation what the Atlantic Coast has been to generations in the past. Fourth, because Los Angeles is the most American city, by the census of 1920, in the country, and it has been said that a tabloid newspaper could go only in a

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city where a great part of the population could not read English. I wished to disprove this. And fifth, because the center is Hollywood, which to the outside part of the country, is known as a more or less salacious place, and I wanted to prove that the placing of a clean newspaper in such a locality could be as much, if not more, of a success than in any other place. . . ." "It would seem," Bessie observes after citing Cornelius' reasons for selecting Los Angeles, "that Vanderbilt was entering the publishing field in an effort to disprove every accepted rule of the game." The first issue of his effort, the *Illustrated Daily News*, appeared on the streets September 3, 1923.<sup>16</sup>

Daily, Neil apologized for the first William Henry. At the top of his editorial page he placed the slogan: "The Public Be Served." Bessie relates, "He was no radical, but when he supported union labor and attacked vested interests, he created a tremendous stir in the big-business-dominated atmosphere of Los Angeles." Vanderbilt's platform, however, was always innocuous. He insisted on:

1. Americanism.
2. California—united.
3. Adequate traffic facilities for Los Angeles.
4. More schools for Los Angeles.
5. More playfields for Los Angeles.
6. Clean press—a paper that may safely enter any home.

At the beginning, point 6 promised dividends. In a year, the circulation of the *Illustrated Daily News* touched 180,000.<sup>17</sup>

But Vanderbilt, according to Bessie, ". . . was a thorough-going optimist with a restless hankering for instantaneous success. He did not temper his ambition with an adequate

appreciation of the practical problems of business management." Then, too, he ". . . embarked his paper on numerous campaigns which were more courageous than politic." Before testing the reactions of advertisers to his policies, he founded other tabloids elsewhere. In December 1923, he established the San Francisco *Illustrated Daily Herald*; two years later, the Miami *Tab*. Meanwhile, he formed the *Vanderbilt Weekly* for the Sunday audience, and the *Vanderbilt Farmer* for the Florida public.<sup>18</sup>

In the beginning of 1926, the chain desperately needed \$300,000. But General Vanderbilt, who had already advanced \$1,080,000 in demand notes to his son, declined to finance the newspapers further.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the fourth Cornelius ended his career as editor. "When I failed, I was within a stone's throw of success"—Neil vindicated his enterprise in the *Fourth Estate* for July 31, 1926. His stand had won the *Illustrated Daily News* 215,000 readers. "Rather than compromise with ideals foreign to my own, I preferred to stop publication," Vanderbilt protested. "In all my newspaper work, I tried my best to express my feeling that America should really be the *land of the free* and not the home of *financial aristocracy*."

"When I became a newspaper publisher"—Neil interpreted his failure—"I had not only to fight the usual battles that are part of any new publishing venture, but an unexpected opposition that sprang from my own family and friends; an opposition that was more surprising because it had been heralded by promises of support which I had relied upon."

"In my newspapers," Vanderbilt asserted, "I made no



compromise with family, with friends, or with caste. My attitude may not have been perfectly right, as no man's ever is, but it was my own. The Vanderbilt newspapers sought to reflect the ideas of social justice and liberality which had been instilled into me by my newspaper training. Some of these tendencies were objected to, silently, by my family and friends, when they found their way into print under my signature. They had remained in their grooves of position and attitude, while I had grown out of this into a new and freer atmosphere.

"My failures were not failures of editorial judgment," the unfortunate publisher complained, "but failures due to my reliance on the judgment of alleged newspaper business and financial *experts*. If I had *gone easy* on certain topics and compromised with the ideas of others, I would not be in my present difficulties."

Under the ownership of E. Manchester Boddy, the Los Angeles *News* continued, but no other Vanderbilt newspapers survived. Meanwhile, the fourth Cornelius earned his living, now as a journalist, now as a novelist, now as an advertising executive. He endeavored, by means of advances from the estates of R. T. Wilson and Cornelius Vanderbilt II, to satisfy the claims of all original stockholders and creditors of the chain. His personal fortune suffered thereby, for in 1931 he testified, in answer to a suit, that he was worth but \$120. The marriages of this impoverished Vanderbilt do not appear to have been happy. In 1927, he divorced Rachel Littleton, who did not share his taste for journalism. A year later, he wedded at Reno the former Mary Weir, who had separated from the Chicagoan Waldo Hancock Logan. In

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1931, he parted from his second wife, after accusing Peter Arno of being over-attentive. Finally, in 1935, he made a Miss Helen Varner of Clarksburg, West Virginia, the third and present Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt IV.<sup>20</sup>

Neil's sister Grace might have become Mrs. Henry Gassaway Davis III without undue publicity, if the disappointed editor had not been anxious to prove himself a reporter. On the 8th of June, 1927, Vanderbilt gave other newsmen this story: "My parents are very much against the wedding. Grace called me up this morning to tell me that they are going to get married. I think that the reason for this haste is that my mother wanted her to marry an Englishman. I am very glad that she has done what she has done, for Mr. Davis is a very fine young man, and they are very much in love with each other." In 1938, two years after Davis, divorced, chose Consuelo, the daughter of W. K. Vanderbilt II, as his second wife, Neil's sister quietly became the bride of Robert Livingston Stevens, a member of the Stevens family which once competed with the Commodore, and later founded Stevens Institute at Hoboken.<sup>21</sup>

Neil, in 1935, published an irreverent but unentertaining autobiography, *Farewell to Fifth Avenue*. He did record, for all time, the immortal comment of R. T. Wilson on Henry Frick, but apparently without tasting the anecdote, for he devoted most of *Farewell to Fifth Avenue* to excited interpretations of capitalism and unanimated interviews with statesmen. Evidently, at the age of thirty-six, Cornelius Vanderbilt IV remained an impatient adolescent, pathetically proud of irritating other Vanderbilts. He told, with ill-concealed eagerness, how he discomfited Harold by asking reportorial

questions about the America's Cup. "Who is this fellow, anyway?" The skipper of "Rainbow" turned to Vincent Astor. "Why, Harold, it's your cousin," the master of the "Nourmahal" replied. "I don't believe it"—the older Vanderbilt judged the fourth Cornelius. "No Vanderbilt could be so irreverent about the Cup." For a moment, the autobiographer did illuminate the anxieties of yacht owners. "There is no point in dodging facts," stated W. K. Vanderbilt II. "In another ten years there won't be a single great fortune left in America. The country will come back—it always does; but we won't." "What do you propose to do about it?" asked Cornelius IV. "Do? What can we do? Everyone for himself." W. K. II despaired of the United States. "I personally shall spend some of the remaining time in cruising aboard my yacht, seeing the world and trying to have a good time. If I were twenty years younger, then perhaps—oh, well, what's the use! I am not twenty years younger."<sup>22</sup>

Since writing *Farewell to Fifth Avenue*, Neil has been seldom militant. Once, at the age of twenty-four, he had spoken of ". . . the glorious privilege of being independent. Service in some form or other should be the keynote of every worthwhile thing in life," he proposed. "Newspaper work gives one a greater scope for serving the public at large and moulding public opinion than any other present-day occupation."<sup>23</sup> At the age of forty, the formerly ardent editor signed an article entitled

#### ARE HOLLYWOOD WOMEN SEXLESS?

The health, in recent years, of Brigadier General Vanderbilt has been imperfect. He has drunk beer, instead of wine,



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at the table of 640 Fifth Avenue. And instead of plotting, as he did in 1928, the defense of Philadelphia against an invading army of 25,000, he has inspected the stuffed uniforms in the glass cases of his library. The military achievements of this aging, ailing Vanderbilt have been recognized. In 1935, when he resigned the command of the 77th Division of the U. S. Army, the third Cornelius possessed not only the Distinguished Service Medal, but the New York State Conspicuous Service Medal, the Mexican Border Service Medal, the Victory Medal, the Order of the Crown of Belgium, and the Belgian Croix de Guerre. He also held the rank of Commander in the Legion of Honor, the proper distinction to wear whenever the Vanderbilt Palace dines a marshal of France.<sup>24</sup>

The General has made regular although wistful contributions to Republican Campaign Funds. Thirty-nine years ago the Party suggested, but did not nominate, Vanderbilt for Congressman from the Seventh District. In business this steadfast Cornelius has been completely self-effacing, although a director of seemingly companies. In 1931, he sat on the board of sixteen corporations, including All America Cables; American Express Company; Canton, Aberdeen & Nashville Railroad; Central Hanover Bank & Trust Company; Chase National Bank of the City of New York; Chicago, St. Louis & New Orleans Railroad; Delaware & Hudson Company; Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad; Illinois Central Railroad; Mercantile Insurance Company of America; Mississippi Valley Railway Company; Mutual Life Insurance Company; North British & Mercantile Insurance Company; Philippine Railway Company; Saratoga Association; Sara-

toga Association for the Improvement of the Breed of Horses. In that year, according to the House Committee investigating the major shareholdings in American railroads, neither the General nor any other descendant of Cornelius II owned stock in the New York Central.<sup>25</sup>

After the World War, the third Cornelius replaced the "North Star" with the "Winchester," a 225-foot steam yacht which had previously flown the pennants of Peter Rouss, Vincent Astor, and Russell Alger. Of late, Vanderbilt has reduced expenses by leasing a smaller vessel, the "Sabiha III." He has maintained not only "Beaulieu" at Newport, but also 640 Fifth Avenue. On the first family palace he pays taxes at the rate of \$197 the night.<sup>26</sup>

Within William Henry's mansion, the former Grace Wilson has preserved inviolate the ornamental essence of the Vanderbilt Legend. Served by domestics clad in the well-known maroon, she has insisted on the almost forgotten ceremony of "the carpet." Her men always augment the stateliness of her receptions by unfolding, from the vestibule of 640 down the stairs to the sidewalk below, a costly red carpet reminiscent of Mrs. Astor's era.

At six and one-half minutes before nine o'clock on the evening of November 27, 1939, Grace Vanderbilt alighted, at the Thirty-ninth Street Entrance of the Metropolitan Opera House, from her Augustan maroon Rolls Royce, Number Plate 1N-575. Casting her celebrated beige fur scarf about her throat, she posed, in her rose lamé gown and headache band, to the ecstasy of a squadron of news photographers. Thirty-eight and one-half minutes before, Lawrence Tibbett, Giovanni Martinelli, and Elisabeth Rethberg had opened the

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fifty-seventh season of the Metropolitan with the first act of *Simon Boccanegra*.



On the 17th of May, 1940, General and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt III announced the sale of 640 Fifth Avenue to the Astor Estate. Presumably an office building will replace the palace. It has been reported that the Vanderbilts will reside henceforth in a somber gray mansion at 3 East Seventy-first Street.

## IV

At eleven-thirty o'clock, on the evening of December 1, 1902, detectives led by Inspector Brooks smashed the first-story windows of the brownstone dwelling at 5 East Forty-fourth Street, and invaded the gaming rooms of Richard Canfield. "We understand," the officers informed the discomfited proprietor, "that gambling is going on in here. This is a gambling house." <sup>1</sup>

"A gambling house?" Richard Canfield, whose preference for the style of Thackeray was decided, repeated, with distaste, the obvious statement. "Gentlemen, this is my private residence, and I assure you all this is needless trouble on your part. I would have been glad to have admitted you at the reception door if you had indicated a desire to enter. I assure you that there is nothing here that needs your attention. Nor do I ask you to accept my bare word. The freedom of the house is yours—though I am sorry you have broken



my windows." Curiously, no patrons were frequenting the temple of chance at that hour.

At last Canfield led the detectives, disappointed in other stories, to the third floor. "This is my own apartment, gentlemen, rather comfortable, I think," he admitted. "I use it also as my private office." The proprietor begged the officers not to hammer on the walls, for the sake, he entreated, of the mother-of-pearl inlaid in the panels. It was, however, by such tapping that the police came upon a secret closet, crowded with roulette wheels and faro layouts.

In the parlors of 5 East Forty-fourth Street, the gambler served exquisite dishes prepared by the chefs of Delmonico's adjacent restaurant. He was always fastidious. In the spring, he would travel to London and mix cocktails in the home of James McNeill Whistler, who declared, gratefully, of his guest: "He is the only man who has never made a mistake in my studio." In New York, he hung his superb Whistlers (including his own portrait) in the withdrawing-rooms of his town house opposite the Saint Regis Hotel. When lunching, Canfield chose invariably the cuisine of the Hotel Lafayette. "If I had been able to choose my profession," this owner of polite hells in New York, Newport, and Saratoga once confessed, with regret, to a reporter, "I would have become a professor of literature." Earlier in his career, while doing six months in jail in Providence, Rhode Island, he acquired a taste for the club life of Thackeray's novels. In time, he managed delicate establishments, for, according to his biographer, he counted among his clients Willian Collins Whitney, John W. Gates, and both Alfred and Reginald Vanderbilt. "A certain well-known banker"—*The New York Times*

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understood that the doorway of 5 East Forty-fourth Street was difficult—"left his check for \$75,000 with Canfield as the result of one night's play." <sup>2</sup>

Indeed, it is probable that the wealthy reputation of the Forty-fourth Street House decided District Attorney William Travers Jerome to raid the premises. "I have in my possession the names of a score of your patrons, men of prominence in this city," the attorney threatened the proprietor. "It is my intention to summon them as witnesses, unless you are willing to acknowledge your connection with this place, and assume the responsibility for its management." <sup>3</sup>

In his safe Canfield possessed, according to a well-founded report, the I.O.U.'s of Reginald Claypole Vanderbilt for \$300,000. Now, he answered, quietly: "I'll stand for the house, but I'll protect my patrons, even if it should mean some personal inconvenience to myself." Then, magnanimous, he told newspapermen: "District Attorney Jerome has been very gentlemanly in his actions toward me. He has certainly been as courteous in his manner as he could be under the circumstances. I am sorry the police have been so rough in the handling of my establishment, but I suppose that all comes in the line of police duty and police business." <sup>4</sup>

Reginald Vanderbilt, like other clients of the Forty-fourth Street House, declined, even though served with a subpoena, to testify against his host. But he offended the gambler, the newspapers insinuated, by settling the \$300,000 indebtedness for \$130,000. Usually, this son of Cornelius II played with fine carelessness. On his twenty-first birthday, December 19, 1901, Reggie dropped, rumor held, no less than \$70,000 in one evening. Indisputably, long before his

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graduation from Yale in 1902, Vanderbilt traveled spiritually far beyond the Fifty-eighth Street gates of his mother's palace.<sup>5</sup>

He married, in April 1903, Cathleen, the daughter of Mrs. Frederick Neilson, who gave birth in the next year to a daughter, Cathleen. It is plausible that Cathleen Neilson did not share her husband's zest for sports, for she divorced him in 1919 and wedded, two years later, Sydney J. Colford, Jr. Reginald, who had been expert at polo in college, lavished on horse shows the devotion his father had spent on charities. Rightfully, he secured the presidency of both the American Hacking Horse Society and the American Association of Horse Shows. The sportsman, neglectful of architecture, maintained only an unremarkable town house at 12 East Seventy-seventh Street, and an undistinguished country home, "Sandy Point Farm," at Portsmouth, outside of Newport. But in March 1923, he married Miss Gloria Morgan, a young girl who not only entered with ease into his uncomplicated existence, but found favor, besides, with his mother.<sup>6</sup>

"She had peculiar ways of showing her affection for me," Gloria wrote in her reminiscences, *Without Prejudice*. "Has Gloria received her pearls yet?" Mrs. Vanderbilt asked her son while lunching in the public dining room of the Ambassador Hotel. "Now, Mother," Reginald fidgeted, "you know I would love to give Gloria pearls, but I do not intend buying her a cheap necklace, and I cannot afford the kind I would like." "Please bring me a pair of scissors," the dowager summoned the *maître d'hôtel*. She then snipped off one third, or \$70,000 worth, of the rope round her own neck.



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"There you are, Gloria," Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II proclaimed. "All Vanderbilt women have pearls." <sup>7</sup>

It was at nine o'clock in the morning, on February 20, 1924, that the former Gloria Morgan bore Reginald Vanderbilt a daughter: Gloria. The little girl was the granddaughter of the career diplomatist Henry Hayes Morgan; the great-granddaughter of our Chilean General Judson Kilpatrick. But to Reggie, she was a member of the House. "It is fantastic how Vanderbilt she looks," the father remarked. "See the corners of her eyes, how they turn up." <sup>8</sup>

Graciously, that winter Reginald gave his wife her first town car, a Marmon gray and white in his horse-show colors. Unhappily, his health, mined by insomnia, was delicate. In the spring of 1925, the millionaire undertook the cure at Vichy. "One morning when he was at the baths," Mrs. Vanderbilt told in her memoirs, "I received a note from Dr. Binet, his physician, asking to see me in private. When he entered, his manner was grave," she recollected. <sup>9</sup>

"Mrs. Vanderbilt," Binet announced, "you must be told the seriousness of Mr. Vanderbilt's condition. He has sclerosis of the liver, and if he wishes to prolong his life, it can be done in but one way—a moderation of his living."

"And that?" his wife inquired.

"He must drink very little in the future. In fact, I would suggest not at all."

"That," Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt has written, "was like a sentence for Reggie of almost instant annihilation. It is difficult to break the habits of a lifetime; the only immunity for him from such a verdict was to keep him away as long as possible from America and his old set."

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Until late summer, the Vanderbilts remained in France. On the 4th of September, 1925, a month after their return to the United States, Reginald died at Newport of a throat ailment complicated by two internal hemorrhages. His brother-in-law Harry Payne Whitney, who supervised the funeral, commanded the requisite private train to New York, and chartered the municipal ferryboat "William T. Collins" for the last stage of the journey to Staten Island.

The estate of the departed, which passed in equal shares to his daughter Cathleen, since 1923 the wife of Harry Cooke Cushing III, and to his daughter Gloria, totaled \$6,253,102. One trust fund, of \$5,000,000 par value, amounted to \$5,298,339; another, of \$1,250,000 par value, amounted to \$954,763. Cathleen, in 1932, divorced Cushing to marry Lawrence Wise Lowman, vice-president in charge of broadcasting at the Columbia Broadcasting System. Eight years afterward she separated from her second husband. Her mother, in 1927, had died in Paris. Until now she has escaped the disorderly publicity which is the lot of her half-sister.<sup>10</sup>

## V

Harry Payne Whitney, on his decease in 1930, left his children no less than \$71,771,303. His wife has inherited, from her father, \$7,250,000; from her mother, \$7,100,000. Under such costly circumstances, it would be almost inelegant to begrudge Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney the publicity

her museum and her sculpture have received. She has been, besides, a good mother. Her daughters, Mrs. G. Macculloch Miller (once the wife of Roderick, son of Ambassador Charlemagne Tower) and Mrs. Barklie McKee Henry, have tastefully avoided all *éclat*. Her son, Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, who in 1923 married Miss Marie Norton (now Mrs. W. Averill Harriman), and in 1931 Miss Gwladys Crosby Hopkins, niece of the Marquise de Polignac, has led a profitable business life. In 1939, as Chairman of the Board of Pan American Airways, he was responsible for the inauguration of schedules to Europe. (Cornelius Vanderbilt or "Sonny" Whitney is not to be confused with his first cousin John Hay ("Jock") Whitney, the son of Payne Whitney and Helen, the daughter of John Hay.)<sup>1</sup>

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, whose fondness for sculpture dates from her girlhood, studied conscientiously in the studios of Henry Anderson, James Earle Fraser, and Andrew O'Connor. In time, she evolved painstaking public memorials. She created the Aztec Fountain in the Pan American Building, Washington; the Titanic Memorial; monuments to War Dead in Washington, New York, and Saint-Nazaire; and at Palos, a tribute to Christopher Columbus. Her achievements, very triumphs of application, are admirably adapted to the ends of World's Fairs. No less than four examples of her *œuvre* were on exhibit at the New York World's Fair of 1939: the statue of Peter Stuyvesant (destined, ultimately, for Stuyvesant Square) in the Dutch pavilion; the semi-mystical monument "To the Morrow"; the El Dorado Fountain in the Memorial Gardens; the "Group in Tennessee Marble" in the Contemporary Arts Building.



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To our regret, Gertrude has not confined her artistic ambition to modeling. She has assumed the rôle of Maecenas, a part which puts the Vanderbilt Legend to a severe test. This lady of the blood has, notwithstanding, been credited with founding a Museum. As early as 1908, if we are to believe an historian in her hire, Mrs. Whitney recognized “. . . the difficulties which faced the American artist in reaching the public.” In that year, she introduced the custom of inviting artists she esteemed to exhibit in her studio. Unmistakably, that benevolent intention led her, twenty-three years afterward, to open, under the auspices of President Hoover, the Whitney Museum of American Art.

If Gertrude devoutly wished to encourage American art, she might have considered the example of France, a nation which has never humiliated her painters and sculptors by withdrawing them from competition with those of other countries. Mrs. Whitney, however, has not hesitated to exclude for eternity all alien works of art from the walls of her galleries on Eighth Street.

In selecting the proper canvases and statues for her Yankee art parlors, she has usually eliminated the disquieting. (Her extensive collection, in June 1937, included no more than two water colors by John Marin.) The first William Henry Vanderbilt, it will be remembered, placed the same happy confidence in the harmless.<sup>2</sup>



When Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt, on the 25th of July, 1934, filed a formal request for the guardianship of her daughter, Gloria, she met the unexpected opposition of her

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own mother, Mrs. Henry Hayes Morgan, and of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney. In the hearing that followed, Gertrude, eager to prove Reginald's widow an unbecoming mother, introduced testimony which might have impaired the reputation of a lesser House. On the 3rd of October, Marie Caillot, a maid discharged from the service of Mrs. Vanderbilt, hinted at an undue intimacy between her mistress and Lady Milford Haven. Afterward, Mlle. Caillot retracted the statement and suggested that the "undue intimacy" might have been a friendly greeting.<sup>3</sup>

Thelma, Lady Furness, traveled in vain from England to defend her sister Mrs. Vanderbilt: Mrs. Whitney defeated the petition and secured the legal custodianship of her niece. And on the 22nd of November, Gertrude summoned reporters to her palace at 871 Fifth Avenue (once the residence of her father-in-law) and issued this communiqué:

"My only thought since little Gloria came to live with me, and throughout the court proceeding, has been for the child's welfare. Her health, her happiness and what was best for her have been my only interest.

"It was always my hope and my desire to bring the child and her mother close together. My house was open to Mrs. Vanderbilt at all times. She could come to be with Gloria whenever she wanted.

"The case was not of my making. The papers were served on me. The last thing I wanted was a court proceeding.

"I am sure you all love and understand children, and I want to appeal to you in behalf of this little girl. She is the chief person in this case through no fault of her own. I appeal to you to put this case out of the public mind. I am sure

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you agree with me that the less said about the proceeding the better for the sake of the child.

“I want to tell you all how very happy I am that Justice Carew has seen fit to give me this great responsibility. I accept it very seriously, and shall do everything in my power to be worthy of his confidence in me.”

Mrs. Vanderbilt, on that afternoon, called the ruling of the court fantastic. “Mrs. Whitney some day will be shown for what she really is.” So Reginald’s widow invoked, in her turn, the sympathies of newsmen.<sup>4</sup>

## VI

Hitherto, the journey from Middletown, Rhode Island, to Boston had never occupied less than one hour thirty-five minutes. Yet, on the afternoon of January 14, 1901, the private train of the Head of the House of Vanderbilt reached Back Bay Station in exactly one hour eleven minutes. To convey his bride, the former Miss Elsie French, to the capital of Massachusetts, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt commanded his personal parlor car, number 2140; locomotive number 856; and the services of George Dustin as engineer and E. G. Eaton as conductor. Earlier in the day, the special train of the first W. K. Vanderbilt, consisting of five parlor cars, one buffet car, and one private car, had returned 120 of the wedding guests from Newport to New York.<sup>1</sup>

It was in May 1900 that Mrs. Francis Ormonde French,



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widow of the late President of the Manhattan Trust Company, announced the engagement of her daughter Elsie to Alfred Vanderbilt. The father of the fiancée had accumulated a fortune of \$15,000,000, including a town house at 7 East Sixty-first Street, a retreat at Tuxedo Park, and a cottage, "Harbor View," on Chastellux Avenue, Newport. The father of the fiancé, it will be remembered, had left an estate of \$72,500,000. The betrothal evoked, therefore, altogether \$87,500,000.<sup>2</sup>

Vanderbilt, on his graduation from Yale in 1899, determined to conclude his education, which he had so graciously begun at Saint Paul's and Groton, with a voyage around the world. It is possible that his project did not please the House. When the heir and his companions departed for Vancouver in the private car of the second Cornelius, neither Depew nor any member of the family bade farewell to the excursionists at Grand Central. Alfred's intimate, Potter Palmer II, insisted however on saying good-by at the Terminal. The young millionaire interrupted the tour, it is true, to return to Newport at the death of his father, but he resumed his travels in the following winter, and at the time of the announcement of his engagement, had touched the Continent.<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1900, the Head of the House assumed a position as clerk in the office of E. V. W. Rossiter, Treasurer of the New York Central. Vanderbilt, according to a senior official of the system, would labor from nine to five and devote but one hour to luncheon. But Alfred was already cultivating interests other than carloadings. In the year before, he had joined the Coaching Club. Soon, he would establish at Oakland Farm, near Newport, his private polo field.<sup>4</sup>

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Then the terrible refinement of Elsie's wedding gifts may have reminded the groom of pleasures unclerical. From her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Tuck of Paris, the bride received not only a collarette of diamonds, but a rope of pearls and rubies; from Reginald and Gladys Vanderbilt, three chestfuls of table silver; from Mr. and Mrs. H. McK. Twombly, a pair of massive candelabra and four solid silver candlesticks; from Mr. and Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, a collarette of diamonds; from the first W. K. Vanderbilt, a collarette of diamonds; and from Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II, a diadem and necklace of diamonds.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Gwynne Vanderbilt, indeed, may have decided the details of the fête. She presented the bride and groom with a unique marriage certificate, enclosed in a bird's-eye maple case of selected wood, heavily and handsomely bound in silver. Doubtless, she insisted that Delmonico dignify the marriage with his breakfast: the outstanding caterer included, among other plates, his terrapin Maryland. At "Harborview," Mrs. French met the guests in her yellow withdrawing-room, on that day a very bower of yellow orchids. Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II received, as did her son and daughter-in-law, in an ingeniously created Old English rose arbor.

Alfred, in the early winter of 1907, planned a \$3,500,000 hotel, The Vanderbilt, on Park Avenue between Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets, once the site of the home of Cornelius II and Alice. He reserved, needless to say, suites for himself and his set on the top floor of the edifice. Otherwise, the Head of the House did not interest himself in affairs. Although he did not devote himself to yachting, he maintained a respectable fleet, and probably passed more time on





MRS. CORNELIUS VANDERBILT III AT THE OPERA (*left*) AND WITH HER CHILDREN (*center*). HER HUSBAND ON FIFTH AVENUE (*right*)



(Photos Brown Brothers)





*(Photos Morris Rosenfeld  
and Gordon Morris)*

*Left: H. S. VANDERBILT AT THE WHEEL OF "RANGER"*  
*Right: MISS GLORIA VANDERBILT AT A LONG ISLAND FÊTE*



the water than in the offices of the New York Central. These ships flew his red and white pennant: the "Adroit," a screw steamer of forty-nine tons; the "Caprice," a sloop designed by Herreshoff; the "Alert," a thirty-five-foot screw launch; and the "Wayfarer," a 1,100-ton screw steam yacht, formerly the property of Frederick.<sup>6</sup>

He did not hesitate to endow the Newport Y.M.C.A. with \$100,000, or Yale University with \$250,000, but he paid somewhat more serious attention to automobilism and to horse shows. In 1905, he invested \$30,000 in a ninety-horsepower Fiat. That motor, with Paul Sartoris at the wheel, finished first in the Fifty-Mile Ormond Handicap. Afterward, abetted by his brother Reginald, by William H. Moore, and by Robert A. Fairburn, Alfred relieved the financial anxiety of the National Horse Show Association. The associates purchased the interest of the Madison Square Garden, reorganized the Amusement, and introduced jumping events which boosted box-office receipts. In London and in New York, this Vanderbilt gained for his horse-show colors, red and white, the requisite distinctions.<sup>7</sup>

At Madison Square Garden, assisted by a guard in the livery of the House, Alfred defeated William H. Moore, in the four-in-hand class, despite the imported Russian horses which the Chicago sportsman entered. At Olympia, for two years in succession, he proved himself the distinguished coachman of his era. Driving his celebrated team of grays across Teddington Bridge at Twickenham, thence through Richmond, East Shen, past the Roehampton Polo Grounds to Barnes, he easily overcame the chestnuts of English whips. He received his reward for these two triumphs in

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the presence of a most polite audience. Lady Lonsdale, Prince and Princess Liechtenstein, and Paul Cambon were boxholders on the day he won the Joseph E. Widener Challenge Cup.<sup>8</sup>

It would seem that Alfred was not always aware of his talent for tooling. "It was with some difficulty that we induced Mr. Vanderbilt to take up public coaching," Reginald Rives, the historian of the Coaching Club, has written, "and I think it was accomplished largely through the efforts of Mr. Bronson, at whose house Mr. Vanderbilt was a frequent visitor, and, also, through my great desire to *break in* a younger man in whom I saw such possibilities for a road coachman, he having the *means*, desire and all the essentials for producing a competent and enthusiastic coachman." The young millionaire, in after years, did not disappoint his sponsors. As early as 1898, he underwrote the public coach "Pioneer." Soon he became a member of the executive committee and of the committee on the club coach between the Holland House and the Ardsley Club.<sup>9</sup>

It is probable that Alfred surprised, with his drastic elegance, even the fashionable members of the Coaching Club. When he and the insurance heir James Hazen Hyde undertook, in October 1901, to tool a drag at top speed between New York and Philadelphia, the youthful capitalists required, in addition to seventy-eight horses, a retinue composed of a carriage expert, a photographer, and a valet. Leaving the Holland House, at Fifth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, at 5:55 in the morning, the whips alighted at the Bellevue only nine hours and twenty-five minutes later. After six minutes' grace in the Philadelphia hotel, the exquisites



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departed for New York, which they reached in no more than ten hours and ten minutes. Thanks to the manservant in the carriage, the voyage did not unduly fatigue either Hyde or Vanderbilt. In his choice of drags, Alfred was quite as particular as the older clubmen. Willie K. maintained, whenever in America, an irreproachable conveyance with yellow body and red undercarriage. Now, his nephew ordered a coach in the very color of the House.<sup>10</sup>

In the spring of 1902, Alfred, along with Robert L. Gerry, William P. Burden, and other whips, tested the conditions of Long Island roads by driving to the manor, at Oakdale, of W. Bayard Cutting. If the coachmen, on this occasion, made use of only three relays of horses, they called on thirteen members of the club to supply twenty-one teams when they drove from New York to "Oakland Farm." And yet, notwithstanding that American enthusiasm, Vanderbilt preferred to tool in England.<sup>11</sup>

As if haunted, albeit politely, by the Commodore's pride in trotters, his great-grandson for eight years displayed the merits of American horses on the Brighton road. During the pleasant months, Vanderbilt would drive a public coach from the Hotel Victoria, London, to the Hotel Metropole in the resort. His two drags, the "Viking" and the "Venture," charmed English sportsmen who remembered the carriage of the late Duke of Beaufort. The noble, fifty years before, had paced his team on that highway. Coaching, to be sure, was not Alfred's only English pleasure. On the Thames, domestics clad in his horse-show colors manned his motor launch. When he boarded his barge, each week-end, for a few hours' diversion, his crew stood in double line down a wide walk.

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Those serving men all wore white sailor hats encircled with red ribbon, on which A. G. V. was stamped in gold, and, the moment he doffed his hat, saluted. In the evening, the millionaire provided Water Music for his guests: a military band played for \$400 the performance. Overly elated, perhaps, by his Händelian amusement, this Vanderbilt celebrated the obsequies of Edward VII with a Funeral Party in his sumptuous flat in Gloucester House.<sup>12</sup>

Sadly, divorce interrupted the delicacies on which Alfred insisted, on the Thames and on Park Lane. In the spring of 1908, Elsie French, who had borne her husband a son, William Henry III, filed suit. Vanderbilt, ever gracious, departed for England on the "Mauretania" on that 1st of April, but left, in his apartment at the Plaza, his personal valet, Howard Kempster. Kempster, formerly the manservant of Cornelius II, then testified in the proceedings on behalf of Mrs. Vanderbilt. In court, witnesses suggested that Alfred had been guilty of misconduct on his private car, "The Wayfarer," and associated his name with that of Agnes O'Brien Ruiz, wife of the Cuban attaché in Washington. On Elsie, who assumed, once the final decree was granted, the title of Mrs. French Vanderbilt, her former husband bestowed ten of the Vanderbilt millions. Not long thereafter, Mrs. Ruiz committed suicide in London. Alfred, on the 17th of December, 1911, elected as his second wife Mrs. Margaret Emerson McKim, daughter of the Baltimore Bromo-Seltzer magnate Captain Isaac E. Emerson. At Reno she had separated from her first choice: Dr. Smith Hollins McKim. This Mrs. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt I bore two sons: Alfred

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Gwynne Vanderbilt II, and George Washington Vanderbilt III.<sup>13</sup>

“To drive a coach this year,” Alfred admitted on the 1st of May, 1915, “is out of the question.” Notwithstanding, the whip sailed that day for England on the “Lusitania”: he wished to offer his services to the British Red Cross. “The Germans would not dare attack this ship,” Vanderbilt declared as he boarded the 45,000-ton liner. “They have disgraced themselves”—the millionaire sentenced the invaders of Belgium—“and never in our time will they be looked upon by any human being valuing his honor save with feelings of contempt. How can Germany, after what she has done, ever think of being classed as a country of sportsmen and men of honor on a par with America, England and France?”<sup>14</sup>

It was at 2:15 P.M. on the 7th that Queenstown received the “Lusitania’s” wireless for assistance. Three minutes before, two torpedoes had struck the liner amidships. Immediately, she listed. By 2:33 she had disappeared from the surface of the ocean, approximately ten miles off the Old Head of Kinsale.

“Find all the kiddies you can, boy,” the capitalist, at the first explosion, directed his manservant, Denyer. Together, the millionaire and the valet conducted women and children to the lifeboats. Alfred, who was, surprisingly, an inexperienced swimmer, now gave his lifebelt to a lady. A few minutes later, he joined Charles Frohman and three others who were expecting the end with the proper unconcern. “Why fear death?” The producer asked for more than indifference. “It is the most beautiful adventure life gives us.” The quintet



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joined hands. "They've done for us; we'd better get set," Frohman commented on the final lurch of the steamship. "Vanderbilt was absolutely unperturbed," a survivor recollected. "He stood there, the personification of sportsmanlike coolness. In my eyes, he was the figure of a gentleman waiting for a train."<sup>15</sup>

Of the 1,198 drowned on the "Lusitania," 124 were American citizens. That sensitive equity, Bethlehem Steel, declined nineteen points on the New York Stock Exchange, and Theodore Roosevelt determined: "This represents not merely piracy, but piracy on a vaster scale of murder than old-time pirates ever practiced. This is the warfare which destroyed Louvain and Dinant and hundreds of men, women and children in Belgium. It is warfare against innocent men, women and children, travelling on the ocean, and our fellow countrymen are among the sufferers. It seems inconceivable that we *can* refrain from taking action in this matter, for we owe it not only to humanity but to our national self-respect." The *Berliner Tageblatt* blamed Winston Churchill for the mishap.<sup>16</sup>

As late as 2 P.M. on the afternoon of the 8th, Charles E. Croker, Alfred's secretary, wired the State Department for a tug to be sent from Queenstown to the Old Head of Kinsale. Two hours earlier, however, the House had abandoned all hope: the flags of the Vanderbilt Hotel dipped to half-mast. On the eighteenth floor, Alfred's wife, half-unconscious, no longer understood the bulletins which Cornelius III was receiving, at ten-minute intervals, from Ireland.<sup>17</sup>

On the 27th, in the palace at 1 West Fifty-seventh Street, Dr. Leighton Parks committed Vanderbilt's body to the deep.

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Beyond reading the Episcopalian ritual for the burial of the dead at sea, the clergyman made no mention of the tragedy. But in England, at a meeting of the Waifs and Strays Society, the Bishop of London cried: "When Alfred G. Vanderbilt was face to face with death, he said to his valet: *Come on, and let us save the kiddies.* Those words will run round the world the way no millionaire's ever do." <sup>18</sup>

The estate of the deceased included, in addition to the Vanderbilt Hotel, valued at \$3,000,000: 11,300 shares of New York Central, valued at \$960,000; 28,110 shares of Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, valued at \$4,919,250; 10,110 shares of Pullman, valued at \$1,545,300; 2,055 shares of North Western preferred, valued at \$339,075; 2,500 shares of North Western common, valued at \$316,250; 1,000 shares of New Haven, valued at \$62,000; 700 shares of Northern Pacific, valued at \$72,450; 1,400 shares of Saint Paul, valued at \$120,000; 200 shares of Lincoln National Bank, valued at \$62,500; 1,000 shares of Chemical National Bank, valued at \$404,000; 700 shares of National City Bank, valued at \$266,000; 48 shares of Metropolitan Horse Shows, Limited, London, valued at \$1,843; and 415 shares of National Horse Shows of America, valued at \$16,600. The fortune totaled \$22,381,400. <sup>19</sup>

To his son by Elsie French, William Henry Vanderbilt III, Alfred bequeathed not only the title and tokens of Head of the House, but "Oakland Farm" and a trust fund of \$5,000,000. To his widow, he devised, besides his lodge in the Adirondacks, \$2,000,000 under an ante-nuptial agreement, \$1,000,000 in cash, and \$5,000,000 in trust. Then, to his two sons by Margaret Emerson, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II

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and George Washington Vanderbilt III, he left his residuary estate, or nearly \$4,500,000 each. Happily for those two legatees, the operating company of the Vanderbilt Hotel purchased the building in 1925 for double the appraisal on the date of the "Lusitania's" end.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. French Vanderbilt, in 1919, wedded Lieutenant Paul FitzSimons, whom her son had known in the Navy. Margaret Emerson has married more frequently, choosing in 1918 Raymond T. Baker, Director of the Mint, and in 1928 Charles M. Amory. To Baker, she bore a daughter, Gloria, today Mrs. Henry J. Topping, Jr. On divorcing her fourth husband in 1934, Margaret retook her maiden name.<sup>21</sup>

The House of Vanderbilt, on each anniversary of Alfred's death, has placed flowers in his horse-show colors beside his vault in the Staten Island tomb.<sup>22</sup>

## VII

The second marriage of the first Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt can in no wise be considered an ungrateful alliance. Captain Isaac Edward Emerson, on his death at the age of seventy-one in 1931, left an estate which the first administration accounting appraised at \$12,767,329. Emerson, who graduated in chemistry from the University of North Carolina in 1879, began his business career by opening a drug store in the northwest district of Baltimore, but, thanks to a happy formula for a headache powder, he soon secured an income which



permitted Diesel yachting. The Captain, after organizing the Emerson Drug Company, built in Baltimore the Emerson Hotel. At the time of his decease, he was President of the Citro Chemical Works of America, Chairman of the American Bromine Company, and controlling owner of the Maryland Glass Company. In this world, he abandoned, among other attractive assets, 22,244 shares of Emerson Bromo-Seltzer preferred, valued at \$600,588; 4,418 shares of Emerson Bromo-Seltzer common "A," valued at \$87,122; and 403,305 shares of Emerson Bromo-Seltzer "B," valued at \$8,051,744. In his will, the magnate directed that his holdings, before being distributed to the beneficiaries or to the beneficiaries' children, be placed in trust for the period of twenty years. The capitalist instructed that his second wife, the former Anne Preston McCormick, and his daughter Margaret, were each to receive 35.5 per cent of the income from the fund, and a like percentage of the principal on the date of distribution. To his granddaughter Gloria Baker, the departed bequeathed outright a 6-per-cent interest in this prosperity; to his grandsons Alfred and George Vanderbilt, 2-per-cent shares.<sup>1</sup>

It is pleasant to dwell on the relief which Bromo-Seltzer has offered the Vanderbilt Fortune. Alfred and George, since the fortunate sale of the Vanderbilt Hotel, have probably each possessed portfolios worth over \$6,000,000. And they have always enjoyed the prospect of inheriting the \$8,000,000 in rails their father devised to their mother. Now, in addition to securing rights in their own name in the Emerson estate, they can look forward to sharing, with their half-sister

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

Gloria Baker Topping, in their mother's \$4,550,000 in headache-remedy issues.

When George, on the 6th of September, 1935, wedded Lucille Merriam Parsons, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lester Parsons of Broadacre, Llewellyn Park, West Orange, New Jersey, he had already indicated that he owned no desires which the family tradition could not accommodate. Although he entertained the ambition to hunt big game in Africa, he did not plan irresponsible expeditions. When he journeyed to the Mountains of the Moon in 1933, he welcomed the company of his half-sister, his brother, and his mother. In the next year, on undertaking a safari through Kenya Colony, Uganda Protectorate, Belgian Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and the Cameroons, he sought the advice of a Frenchman of gentle, if Americanized blood, Vicomte Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, and the guidance of a Swedish sportsman, Baron Bror von Blixen. Vanderbilt had interrupted his education at Saint Paul's and the Adirondack-Florida School, but he dignified this second tour by collecting specimens for the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. It would seem, at times, that George wishes to relive the excitements of the second Willie K. Tiring of filming the scientific capture of large game fish, this Vanderbilt, in 1936 and 1937, donated over \$60,000 for prizes for automobile races in which the Italian Tazio Nuvolari and the German Berndt Rosemayer finished first. In 1935, a few days after his twenty-first birthday, George purchased the thirty-two-acre estate of Charles W. Sloane at Sands Point. Recently, however, he has preferred to his Long Island manor his Hawaiian villa.<sup>2</sup>



## CHÂTEAUX AND CHILDREN

Alfred was not yet twenty-five when he gained admittance, in 1937, to the Jockey Club, a society of fifty millionaires who pledge their splendid incomes to racing. The members, including Perry Belmont, Joseph E. Widener, Marshall Field III, John Hay Whitney, Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, and W. Averill Harriman, recognized that the second Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt had inherited the fashionable passion of the first Willie K. Since, the Maryland Jockey Club and the Westchester Racing Association (which controls Belmont Park) have both elected Vanderbilt president.<sup>3</sup>

Alfred did not choose to continue his education beyond Saint Paul's and the Adirondack-Florida School. At the age of nineteen, he had acquired his first horse, Sue Jones, and had decided on a stud. In 1932, he entered eight races, secured one first, no seconds, and two thirds, and won \$725. Three years afterward, he took part in 569 contests, obtained 88 firsts, 88 seconds, and 72 thirds, and earned \$303,705. He did not race under his own name until he came of age in 1933; but once he sponsored his own silks, cerise and white, he gained the distinctions his House demanded. Discovery, in 1935, took seven consecutive stakes. The young owner, to be sure, was ever attentive to his entries. At Sagamore Farm, in Maryland, he would retire at nine o'clock and rise at five-thirty.<sup>4</sup>

At the Santa Anita track, Vanderbilt met Miss Manuela Hudson, a young girl whose devotion to the turf was adequate. The millionaire requested the pleasure of her company at the Preakness Ball, and, on the 8th of June, 1938, married her at his mother's Sands Point estate. Bud Stotler, the trainer of Sagamore Farm, cannot but have approved Al-



## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

fred's choice: Miss Hudson's uncle, Charles S. Howard, owned Seabiscuit. Properly, the bridegroom's silks were brilliant on his wedding afternoon. Airflame, a four-year-old, won the Wilmington Handicap, the principal event of the opening day at Delaware Park.<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II, on the 8th of March, 1939, gave birth to a daughter: Wendie.<sup>6</sup> Her husband, who had promoted at Pimlico in the past season the meeting between Seabiscuit and War Admiral, now arranged, again at the Maryland track, an encounter between Challedon and Kayak II.

## VIII

The members of the Coaching Club have held no meet since 1910, but the fashionable survivors gather each year, at the Turf and Field Club, Belmont Park, on the day of the running of the American Oaks. On that afternoon, the assembled whips recall the drags in the colors of Hyde and Vanderbilt. In 1929, the third William Henry, in memory of his father's horsemanship, sought and secured admission to this company of aging sportsmen. But beyond paying the coachmen that delicate attention, the present Head of the House has eschewed elegance.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Vanderbilt Family, since the night of the Ball, has had faint contact with affairs, the third William Henry has profited by his business training. He received, to be sure, an incomplete education, for after attending Saint

George's School, after enlisting during the War in the Navy, and after preparing for college at the Evans School in Arizona, he spent no more than four months at Princeton University. "I couldn't stand it any longer," he recently owned. But, he entered, immediately, the employ of the United States Trust Company; later, he served in the Bond School of Lee, Higginson & Company in Boston. For two years thereafter, the young millionaire acted as Traveling Car Agent for the New York Central Railroad. "I chased freight cars all over the country"—Vanderbilt remembers his railway experience. Finally, in 1926, William Henry made an investment quite independent of the holdings of the House. In company with H. C. Cushing III, then the husband of Cathleen, the older daughter of Reginald, and with Leroy W. Baldwin, President of the Empire Trust Company, he purchased, from the Du Ponts, the control of the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway. In time, the young investor further diversified his interests. Soon he acquired the direction of the Mount Hope Toll Bridge which joins Bristol with Portsmouth, R. I. In 1931, he assumed the presidency of the Short Line, a bus system which unites Newport with Providence and Fall River, Brewster with Springfield, Hartford with New London, and Bridgeport with Waterbury. It would appear that this great-great-grandson of the Commodore distrusts rails. According to the House Committee investigating railway shareholdings, he held, in all the Vanderbilt roads, but 1,860 shares of North Western preferred. In view of the disappointing market performance of the family stocks, he has probably never repented of the modesty of his commitment.<sup>2</sup>

On the 1st of November, 1923, William Henry contracted

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

an unhappy union with Miss Emily O'Neil Davies, daughter of Mrs. Frederick Martin Davies, and cousin of the late Bradley Martin. In 1925, Mrs. Vanderbilt bore a daughter, Emily, but three years later filed suit for divorce on the curious ground of non-support. In court, she complained that although her husband enjoyed an annual revenue of \$250,000, she was compelled to live on her private income of \$25,000. After marrying, and divorcing, first the producer Sigourney Thayer, second the writer Raoul Whitfield, the former Emily Davies committed suicide at Santa Fe in 1935.<sup>3</sup>

In the interval, William Henry estimated his chance in politics. Since his great-great-grandfather had been seriously considered for President of the United States, he might hope to dispel any popular prejudice against his name. In 1928 he entered, as a Republican, the Rhode Island Senate. On the 27th of December of the next year, he wedded Miss Anne Colby, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Colby, of Llewellyn Park, West Orange, New Jersey. Anne was proper to encourage her husband's ambitions. Her father, once the associate of Herbert Hoover on the U. S. Food Commission, had long been significant in the New Jersey and National Councils of the Republican Party.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Vanderbilt, early in 1931, gave birth to twin daughters: Anne and Elsie. Seven years afterward, she experienced a second satisfaction: her husband's nomination, at the age of thirty-six, for Governor of Rhode Island. And on the morning of November 8, 1938, she learned that William Henry had defeated the Democratic candidate, Robert E. Quinn, by a majority of 40,000.<sup>5</sup>

"Even when industrial conditions improve," her husband's



sensible platform stated, "there will be a certain number who for one reason or another are unable to find regular employment, just as there were in the boom days of 1928-1929. Relief will continue, and the Republican party pledges itself to see that every man, woman and child in the State of Rhode Island, no matter what their race, creed, color or political faith may be, who needs aid will receive it." And Governor Vanderbilt declared in his inaugural address: "Financing of relief is not a temporary proposition. It will be with us for a long time. It must, therefore, be considered as one of the regular functions of government, and if economically possible should be on a pay-as-you-go basis." In the party program, he had taken care to guarantee labor the right to collective bargaining.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1940, the state department heads recommended appropriations exceeding \$22,000,000. Vanderbilt deducted \$7,000,000 from those claims. "When reductions in specific items in this budget are noted," the Governor announced to the General Assembly, "it must be kept in mind that no question of merit has been raised. This administration is not questioning that some of these reduced or eliminated items are worthy and desirable. It is merely contending that the ever-growing costs of government demand the curtailment of all but the absolutely necessary costs. If government had access to unlimited funds, well and good; then the State could be generous and contribute to all sorts of fine enterprises. But such is not the case. To those who are interested in special activities and wish for State assistance, I would direct an appeal to consider the broad aspect of government finance and ask them to co-operate by

## THE VANDERBILT LEGEND

yielding to the needs of absolutely essential agencies. The economic safety of the State demands that as little as possible be abstracted from the pockets of all manner of tax payers. . . . It is well to remember that the power to tax is the power to destroy." By decreasing grants for public libraries, scholarship, religious instruction, and other undertakings, William Henry reduced state expenditures some \$1,300,000 below those of the previous year. To avoid a deficit, he now needed only \$1,600,000 in additional revenue. Wary of slicing the appropriations for relief and old-age assistance, he advised a two-cent tax on cigarettes, to net \$1,000,000, higher assessments on the gross incomes of public utilities, and higher inheritance taxes for the middle brackets.<sup>6</sup>

Besides balancing the budget, Governor Vanderbilt has introduced, in his own words, "the strictest, severest, toughest and the fairest system of civil service yet passed in this country." The act entitles the Governor to appoint a Civil Service Commission of three members, no more than two of whom are to be of the same political party, and provides for classified tests for positions in the classified service. "We rejoice in the fact that we are about to witness an end to the spoils system in Rhode Island," William Henry proclaimed to the New England Council. "Nowhere in the country has the spoils system been used more flagrantly in an attempt to gain purely partisan ends. These abuses have not been limited to any one party, but in the future, regardless of which party is in power, merit and merit alone will be the basis of selection of the vast majority of state employees."<sup>7</sup>

When the truck drivers of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut struck in the spring of 1939, Vanderbilt in-





*(Photos Brown Brothers)*

THE LATE REGINALD VANDERBILT AT NEWPORT;  
HIS BROTHER ALFRED IN ENGLAND





*(Wide World)*

GOVERNOR AND MRS. W. H. VANDERBILT III WITH  
ANNE AND ELSIE ON THE EVE OF HIS ELECTION

duced the operators and employees to compromise on the issue of wages and hours. Joseph Prior, President of the Providence Union, which called the strike, referred publicly to the Governor's "untiring efforts" to adjust the controversy. The representative of the owners, however, resented William Henry's intervention. "Your conclusions could be likened to the Union demanding that the employers jump out of the twentieth story of a building, and your proposing that they jump out of the tenth floor"—the leader of the commercial haulers smarted, unmindful of the hospitality the Vanderbilt farm, "Oakland," had offered the negotiators. "When the employers resist efforts to destroy them, you would imply that they are unfair and unreasonable." <sup>8</sup>

The third William Henry Vanderbilt studied the dispute from a different point of view. "There was no violence whatsoever"—he reviewed the strike. "Usually, cars are overturned and burned." <sup>9</sup>

"You can't find the horses any more." So he excuses, today, his neglect of coaching. It is evident that the Governor of Rhode Island has become a stranger to the ritual of his House.



# THE VANDERBILT RAILROAD HOLDINGS IN 1931

## HOUSE REPORT 2789, 71ST CONGRESS, 3RD SESSION

New York Central Railroad Capital Stock, \$100 par. Outstanding, \$499,145,539.75

Harold Stirling Vanderbilt	164,648 shares
William Kissam Vanderbilt II	27,585 shares
Frederick William Vanderbilt	21,539 shares
Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly	14,637 shares
Mrs. Graham Fair Vanderbilt	10,254 shares
	<hr/>
	238,663 shares, or 4.78%
	voting power

Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Capital Stock, \$50 par. Outstanding, \$43,183,400.

Frederick William Vanderbilt	43,200 shares
Harold Stirling Vanderbilt	37,988 shares
William Kissam Vanderbilt II	25,980 shares
Miss Ruth Twombly	21,600 shares
Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney	5,675 shares
Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II	
as trustee for Mrs. Whitney	3,914 shares
Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II	3,655 shares
Countess Lâszló Széchenyi	4,313 shares
Mrs. William A. M. Burden	18,830 shares
Mrs. James A. Burden	21,600 shares
W. B. Osgood Field *	9,872 shares
W. B. Osgood Field as Trustee	13,608 shares
Mrs. John Henry Hammond	7,500 shares
	<hr/>
	217,645 shares, or 25.19%
	voting power

\* Although not a Vanderbilt, W. B. Osgood Field was the son-in-law of Mrs. Henry White.



# RAILROAD HOLDINGS IN 1931

Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad Capital Stock, \$50 par.  
 Outstanding, \$88,441,300.

Harold Stirling Vanderbilt	46,600 shares
William Kissam Vanderbilt II	45,400 shares
Frederick William Vanderbilt	20,000 shares
Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly	16,000 shares
	<hr/> 128,000 shares, or 7.58%
	voting power

Chicago & North Western Railway, \$100 par. Outstanding, \$158,-  
 438,700 Common; \$22,395,000 Preferred.

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Preferred</i>
Frederick William Vanderbilt	12,000 shares	10,000 shares
Harold Stirling Vanderbilt	16,000 shares	8,250 shares
Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt II		1,555 shares
Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II		1,000 shares
Estate of Cornelius Vanderbilt II		3,123 shares
Estate of Cornelius Vanderbilt II for Mrs. H. P. Whitney		2,160 shares
Estate of Cornelius Vanderbilt II for Countess Lâszló Széchenyi		2,160 shares
William Kissam Vanderbilt II		4,250 shares
William Henry Vanderbilt III		1,860 shares
	<hr/> 28,000 shares	<hr/> 34,358 shares
		or 3.45% voting power

Union Pacific Railroad, \$100 par. Outstanding, \$222,291,600 Com-  
 mon; \$99,543,100 Preferred.

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>Preferred</i>
Harold Stirling Vanderbilt	10,000 shares	
Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly		4,268 shares
	<hr/> 10,000 shares	<hr/> 4,268 shares
		or .44% voting power

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since 1886, when W. A. Croffut wrote *The Vanderbilts and the Story of Their Fortune*, no book has appeared on the Vanderbilt Family. In 1927, A. D. H. Smith published *Commodore Vanderbilt; An Epic of American Achievement* without, however, treating the Commodore in as great detail as I have done in this volume. It has been my aim to write a complete history of the Vanderbilts as a family.

I should like to acknowledge here the inspiration of Gustavus Myers' *History of the Great American Fortunes*, which sets a pitiless standard of research, and of Matthew Josephson's *Robber Barons*, which illuminates the Vanderbilt Age in calcium. Dixon Wecter's *Saga of American Society*, a wise and fascinating chronicle of our social grandeurs, proved an invaluable history of the world in which the Vanderbilts move.

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Simon and Schuster: *Farewell to Fifth Avenue* by Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., copyright 1935.

John V. Van Pelt: *Monograph on the W. K. Vanderbilt House*.

AN ARCHITECTURAL NOTE: Since *The Vanderbilt Legend* was written, further research has proved that J. B. Snook was the architect responsible for the palaces at 680 and 684 Fifth Avenue of Mrs. W. Seward Webb and Mrs. H. McK. Twombly. Richard M. Hunt is known to have assisted George B. Post in creating the northeast tower of the château of Cornelius Vanderbilt II at 1 West Fifty-seventh Street. The firm of Warren and Wetmore designed the town house at 854 Fifth Avenue in which Mrs. Henry White resides.

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<sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, May 11, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 134; New York *Tribune*, May 5, 1876, January 6, 1877.

<sup>5</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> New York *Herald*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>9</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; New York *Sun*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>12</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>13</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Gibbons Papers*, Drew University.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; New York *Post*, January 5, 1877.

### II

<sup>1</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 22, 1876.

<sup>2</sup> *Gibbons Papers*, Drew University.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>4</sup> New York *Herald*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>6</sup> Parton, *Famous Americans*, p. 385.

<sup>7</sup> Harvey, *Reminiscences*, p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> 7 Cowen 349: Adams vs. Vanderbilt.

<sup>9</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1876.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



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### III

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, January 4, 1882.
- <sup>2</sup> New York *Herald*, October 31, 1869.
- <sup>3</sup> White, *Drew*, pp. 96-97.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- <sup>5</sup> New York *World*, November 14, 1877.
- <sup>6</sup> Hone, *Diary*, p. 717.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 781.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 852-853.
- <sup>9</sup> New York *Herald*, October 31, 1844.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, June 26, 1847.
- <sup>12</sup> Hone, *Diary*, p. 801.
- <sup>13</sup> New York *Herald*, June 2, 1847.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *World*, November 13, 1877.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Herald*, March 5, 1879.
- <sup>16</sup> New York *World* and New York *Sun*, November 13, 1877.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.

### IV

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 13, 1877.
- <sup>2</sup> New York *Tribune* and New York *Herald*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>3</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, pp. 61-62.
- <sup>4</sup> New York *Herald*, March 5, 1879.
- <sup>5</sup> New York *World*, December 13, 1877.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Herald*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>7</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>8</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 383.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 383-384.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.
- <sup>11</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>12</sup> Parton, *Famous Americans*, p. 387.
- <sup>13</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

### V

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, February 20, 1854.
- <sup>2</sup> Lang and Davis, *Staten Island*, II, pp. 690-693.

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- <sup>3</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 52.
- <sup>4</sup> New York *Herald*, April 19, 1849.
- <sup>5</sup> 34th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 68.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Herald*, December 3, 1852.
- <sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, March 29, 1852, May 13, 1852.
- <sup>8</sup> 34th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 68.
- <sup>9</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Herald*, November 18, 1852.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Times*, December 2, 1851.
- <sup>12</sup> New York *Herald*, May 16, 1852.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, October 9, 1851.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *Tribune*, April 1, 1852.
- <sup>15</sup> 19 Barbour 222: Briggs vs. Vanderbilt and Drew.
- <sup>16</sup> New York *Times*, August 27, 1852.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Tribune*, September 14, 1852.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, January 7, 1853.
- <sup>19</sup> 17 Smith 306: Quimby vs. Vanderbilt.
- <sup>20</sup> New York *Herald*, April 26, 1853.
- <sup>21</sup> New York *Tribune*, February 15, 1853.
- <sup>22</sup> New York *Herald*, April 26, 1853.
- <sup>23</sup> 34th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 68.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, November 9, 1852.
- <sup>25</sup> New York *Herald*, May 13, 1853.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1878.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, April 29, 1853.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter to Hamilton Fish, February 15, 1853, *Fish Papers*, Library of Congress.
- <sup>29</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>30</sup> New York *Herald*, January 6, 1877.
- <sup>31</sup> New York *Times*, May 20, 1853.
- <sup>32</sup> New York *Herald*, March 10, 1853.

## VI

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Post*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>2</sup> Choules, *The Cruise*, p. 21.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>5</sup> New York *Herald*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1853.
- <sup>7</sup> Choules, *The Cruise*, p. 31.

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- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 46.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-60.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-77.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-118.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 192.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Herald*, September 24, 1853.
- <sup>16</sup> Choules, *The Cruise*, pp. 224, 342.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 349.
- <sup>18</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.

## VII

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, September 24, 1853.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, September 28, 1853.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, September 29, 1853.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, October 28, 1853.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1854.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, March 13, 1854.
- <sup>7</sup> 22 Federal Cases 12957: Sloo et al. vs. Law et al.
- <sup>8</sup> 36th Congress, 2nd Session, Senate Report 292.
- <sup>9</sup> New York *Herald*, December 25, 1854.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 17, 1855.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, March 17, 1856.
- <sup>12</sup> Walker, *The War in Nicaragua*, p. 154.
- <sup>13</sup> 34th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 68.
- <sup>14</sup> Cited in New York *Herald*, March 15, 1856.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Herald*, March 17, 1856.
- <sup>16</sup> 34th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 68.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Herald*, December 20, 1856.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, December 25, 1856.
- <sup>19</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress, 1st Session, Volume 3, pp. 2824-2849.
- <sup>20</sup> 26 Barbour 27: Hamilton vs. Accessory Transit Company.
- <sup>21</sup> 39 Barbour 140: Murray vs. Vanderbilt.
- <sup>22</sup> New York *Tribune*, June 24, 1876.
- <sup>23</sup> New York *Herald*, February 14, 1858.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, April 9, 1857.
- <sup>25</sup> New York *Times*, February 9, 1859.
- <sup>26</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 4, 1859.



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- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, October 17, 1859.  
<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, October 10, 1859.  
<sup>29</sup> *Annual Report of Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company*, May 1860.  
<sup>30</sup> 36th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 45; *New York Herald*, June 30, 1860.  
<sup>31</sup> *New York Herald*, December 31, 1861.  
<sup>32</sup> *New York Times*, December 21, 1859.  
<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28, 1859.  
<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, April 18, 1855.  
<sup>35</sup> *New York Herald*, April 17, 1855.  
<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1855.

## VIII

- <sup>1</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, p. 755.  
<sup>2</sup> Tyler, *Steam Conquers the Atlantic*, p. 212.  
<sup>3</sup> *U. S. Statutes at Large*, IX, p. 187.  
<sup>4</sup> *New York Herald*, April 24, 1850.  
<sup>5</sup> *U. S. Statutes at Large*, X, pp. 21-22.  
<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>7</sup> *U. S. Statutes at Large*, X, pp. 21-22.  
<sup>8</sup> *New York Tribune*, March 8, 1855.  
<sup>9</sup> *New York Herald*, January 9, 1856.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, March 4, 1856.  
<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 34th Congress, 1st Session, p. 1716.  
<sup>12</sup> *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XI, p. 102.  
<sup>13</sup> Seward, *Autobiography*, II, p. 287.  
<sup>14</sup> *New York Herald*, January 1, 1858.  
<sup>15</sup> *Vanderbilt Daily News*, November 2, 1857.  
<sup>16</sup> *New York Herald*, April 2, 1858.  
<sup>17</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress, 1st Session, p. 2841.  
<sup>18</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress, 1st Session, p. 2832.  
<sup>19</sup> *New York Herald*, January 1, 1859.  
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1860.  
<sup>21</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 5, 1858.  
<sup>22</sup> *New York Herald*, December 5, 1859; June 18, 1859.  
<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1859.  
<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1859.  
<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1860.  
<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1860.

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### IX

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, October 19, 1861.
- <sup>2</sup> 37th Congress, 3rd Session, Senate Report 75.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 5, 1862.
- <sup>5</sup> 37th Congress, 3rd Session, Senate Report 75.
- <sup>6</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 1st Session, Volume 1, pp. 609-611.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 584-586.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> New York *Herald*, May 22, 1865, May 23, 1865, May 26, 1865, May 27, 1865, May 29, 1865, May 31, 1865, June 3, 1865.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *World*, April 11, 1876.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, April 11, 1876.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, January 16, 1864, February 2, 1864.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, April 26, 1861.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *Tribune*, June 24, 1861.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, August 25, 1861.
- <sup>16</sup> New York *Times*, August 14, 1861.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 14, 1861.
- <sup>18</sup> New York *Times*, October 26, 1861, November 12, 1861, November 14, 1861.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, November 30, 1868, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>20</sup> Welles, *Diary*, III, pp. 473-474.
- <sup>21</sup> New York *Times*, December 28, 1862, December 29, 1862.
- <sup>22</sup> 39th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 46.
- <sup>23</sup> Derby, *Fifty Years*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>24</sup> 39th Congress, 1st Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 46.
- <sup>25</sup> 38th Congress, 2nd Session, House Ex. Doc. 78.
- <sup>26</sup> New York *Times*, November 24, 1870.
- <sup>27</sup> Riesenbergs, *Clipper Ships*, pp. 5-6.

### X

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, August 23, 1862.
- <sup>2</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, pp. 251-252.
- <sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>4</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 19-20.
- <sup>5</sup> New York *World*, January 5, 1877.

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- <sup>6</sup> Information furnished by the Central Railroad of New Jersey.
- <sup>7</sup> Information furnished by the New York Central System.
- <sup>8</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 1, 1853; November 18, 1853.
- <sup>9</sup> Information furnished by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Herald*, July 5, 1854; February 13, 1855.
- <sup>11</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, pp. 66-67.
- <sup>12</sup> Werner, *Barnum*, p. 268.
- <sup>13</sup> New York *Times*, March 7, 1863.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *Tribune*, April 24, 1863.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Herald*, April 24, 1863; April 25, 1863.
- <sup>16</sup> New York *Times*, June 26, 1863.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1863.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1863.
- <sup>19</sup> White, *Drew*, p. 180.
- <sup>20</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 107-109.
- <sup>21</sup> Stedman, *Stock Exchange*, p. 181.
- <sup>22</sup> Duryea, *The Story of Samuel and Margaret Sloan*.
- <sup>23</sup> *Memorial of the Golden Wedding of Cornelius and Sophia Vanderbilt*.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, July 8, 1865; July 11, 1865; New York *Herald*, July 1, 1865; July 4, 1865; July 10, 1865; July 11, 1865; July 12, 1865; July 13, 1865; July 14, 1865; July 15, 1865; July 16, 1865; July 25, 1865.
- <sup>25</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 21, 1863.
- <sup>26</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, II, pp. 381-382.
- <sup>27</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 113-116.
- <sup>28</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 10, 1885.
- <sup>29</sup> Duryea, *The Story of Samuel and Margaret Sloan*.
- <sup>30</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>31</sup> New York *Herald*, July 1, 1865; July 4, 1865; July 10, 1865; July 11, 1865; July 12, 1865; July 13, 1865; July 14, 1865; July 15, 1865; July 16, 1865; July 25, 1865.
- <sup>32</sup> New York *Times*, July 20, 1866; August 14, 1866; New York *Tribune*, July 26, 1866; August 4, 1866; August 11, 1866.
- <sup>33</sup> Depew, *My Memories of Eighty Years*, p. 15.
- <sup>34</sup> New York *Herald*, January 7, 1877.
- <sup>35</sup> New York *Times*, July 6, 1865.
- <sup>36</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 11, 1866.
- <sup>37</sup> New York *Herald*, November 21, 1865.
- <sup>38</sup> New York *World*, December 27, 1877.



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### XI

<sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, May 17, 1867; May 24, 1867; May 28, 1867; May 29, 1867; June 2, 1867. New York *Tribune*, July 8, 1867; July 18, 1867; July 19, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, Sen. Ex. Doc. 15.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Herald*, December 5, 1863.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14, 1866.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1867.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, January 21, 1867.

<sup>8</sup> New York State Assembly, 90th Session, 1867, Volume 2, Doc. 19.

<sup>9</sup> New York *Times*, November 14, 1867.

<sup>10</sup> New York *Herald*, December 12, 1867.

<sup>11</sup> New York *Times*, February 28, 1866.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, August 30, 1866.

<sup>13</sup> New York *Herald*, May 25, 1865.

<sup>14</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 292.

<sup>15</sup> New York *Herald*, February 24, 1866; February 27, 1866.

<sup>16</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 5, 1867.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 26, 1867.

<sup>18</sup> McElroy, *Jefferson Davis*, Volume 2, pp. 582-587.

<sup>19</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> New York *Herald*, May 2, 1868; May 3, 1868; May 7, 1868; May 13, 1868; May 17, 1868; New York *Times*, May 3, 1868.

### XII

<sup>1</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 6, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> White, *Drew*, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Sunshine and Shadow*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>4</sup> White, *Drew*, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Herald*, October 12, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1868.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, March 3, 1868.

<sup>8</sup> White, *Drew*, p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Committee of the Senate upon the Relations between Labor and Capital*, Washington, 1885, Volume I, p. 1062.

<sup>10</sup> New York *World*, January 5, 1877.

<sup>11</sup> New York State Senate, 92nd Session, 1869, Doc. 58.

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- <sup>12</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 91.  
<sup>13</sup> New York *Herald*, March 15, 1868.  
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, March 17, 1868.  
<sup>15</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 623-624.  
<sup>16</sup> New York *Herald*, March 28, 1868.  
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, April 21, 1868.  
<sup>18</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 96; New York *Times*, March 18, 1870, March 19, 1870.  
<sup>19</sup> New York *Times*, December 7, 1868.  
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, December 10, 1868.  
<sup>21</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>22</sup> Hatch, *Circular Number 1*.  
<sup>23</sup> Adams, *Chapters of Erie*, pp. 401-404.  
<sup>24</sup> New York *Tribune*, June 29, 1870.  
<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>26</sup> New York State Senate, 92nd Session, 1869, Doc. 58.  
<sup>27</sup> New York *Herald*, January 20, 1869.

## XIII

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 10, 1876.  
<sup>2</sup> New York *World*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 5, 1876.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, February 6, 1879.  
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 18, 1868.  
<sup>7</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 120.  
<sup>8</sup> New York *Herald*, August 25, 1869.  
<sup>9</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1877.  
<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Sunshine and Shadow*, p. 196.  
<sup>13</sup> Hungerford, *Men and Iron*, p. 261.  
<sup>14</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.  
<sup>15</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 30, 1878.  
<sup>16</sup> Sachs, *The Terrible Siren*, p. 49.  
<sup>17</sup> New York *Herald*, January 22, 1870.  
<sup>18</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 2, 1878.  
<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, October 24, 1878.  
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1878.  
<sup>21</sup> Sachs, *The Terrible Siren*, p. 106.

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- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.  
<sup>23</sup> House Report 31, 41st Congress, 1st Session.  
<sup>24</sup> New York *World*, June 16, 1869.  
<sup>25</sup> New York *Times*, January 24, 1870.  
<sup>26</sup> New York *Herald*, September 25, 1869.  
<sup>27</sup> New York *Tribune*, September 25, 1869.  
<sup>28</sup> New York *Times*, October 1, 1869.  
<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1869.  
<sup>30</sup> New York *World*, September 25, 1869.  
<sup>31</sup> New York *Herald*, May 2, 1878.  
<sup>32</sup> New York *World*, October 2, 1869.  
<sup>33</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.  
<sup>34</sup> Fowler, *Twenty Years*, p. 119.  
<sup>35</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 2, 1869.  
<sup>36</sup> New York *Times*, December 15, 1877; Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.  
<sup>37</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 11, 1869.  
<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>39</sup> New York *World*, November 11, 1869.  
<sup>40</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 11, 1869.  
<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>43</sup> New York *Times*, August 9, 1872.  
<sup>44</sup> Anonymous, *Life of Col. James Fisk Jr.*, p. 15.  
<sup>45</sup> New York *Times*, October 16, 1878.

## XIV

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, November 20, 1871.  
<sup>2</sup> New York *Times*, November 30, 1871; New York *Herald*, November 30, 1871.  
<sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, April 5, 1870.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 18, 1873.  
<sup>5</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 315.  
<sup>6</sup> New York *Herald*, January 7, 1877.  
<sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, April 19, 1873.  
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1873.  
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, September 10, 1872.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, May 24, 1873, June 5, 1873.  
<sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, November 22, 1879.  
<sup>12</sup> New York *Times*, January 21, 1873.



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- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, May 19, 1870.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1873.
- <sup>15</sup> Adams, *Chapters of Erie*, p. 10.
- <sup>16</sup> New York *Herald*, April 17, 1873.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1873.
- <sup>18</sup> New York *Tribune*, September 20, 1873.
- <sup>19</sup> New York *Sun*, September 22, 1873.
- <sup>20</sup> New York *Herald*, September 21, 1873.
- <sup>21</sup> New York *Times*, September 21, 1873.
- <sup>22</sup> New York *Herald*, September 22, 1873.
- <sup>23</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 25, 1873.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, October 17, 1873.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, October 25, 1873.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1872.
- <sup>27</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 23, 1872.

## XV

- <sup>1</sup> Smith, *Sunshine and Shadow*, p. 38.
- <sup>2</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 134.
- <sup>3</sup> *In Memoriam Cornelius Vanderbilt, Vanderbilt University*, 1877.
- <sup>4</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 134.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Sun*, January 7, 1877.
- <sup>7</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 137.
- <sup>8</sup> New York *Times*, June 24, 1876.
- <sup>9</sup> *Vanderbilt-Vanderbilt University Correspondence*, New York Public Library.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 21, 1878.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, January 7, 1877.
- <sup>12</sup> New York *Times*, February 6, 1879.
- <sup>13</sup> New York *Tribune*, February 13, 1879.
- <sup>14</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Tribune*, February 6, 1879.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1877.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Herald*, May 6, 1876.
- <sup>18</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 15, 1877.
- <sup>19</sup> New York *Herald*, October 17, 1876.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1873.
- <sup>21</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 13, 1877.
- <sup>22</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.

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- <sup>23</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 9, 1878.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, January 5, 1877.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 6, 1877.
- <sup>27</sup> New York *Herald*, January 7, 1877.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1877.
- <sup>29</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 147.
- <sup>30</sup> New York *Herald*, January 9, 1877.

## NOTES ON PART TWO

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, December 30, 1880.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 3, 1882.
- <sup>3</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 380-382.
- <sup>4</sup> White, *Drew*, p. 418.
- <sup>5</sup> New York *Times*, February 28, 1877.
- <sup>6</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> New York *Times*, May 13, 1877.
- <sup>9</sup> Vanderbilt Will Case Clippings, New York Public Library.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Times*, April 8, 1879.
- <sup>11</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 152.
- <sup>12</sup> New York *Times*, February 10, 1880.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, November 22, 1877.
- <sup>14</sup> Verdendorp, *The Verdendorps*, p. 123.

## NOTES ON PART THREE

### I

- <sup>1</sup> Chicago *Daily News*, October 9, 1882.
- <sup>2</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 18, 1882.
- <sup>3</sup> Lewis and Smith, *Oscar Wilde*, pp. 406-407.
- <sup>4</sup> New York *Times*, July 24, 1877.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 25, 1877.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Tribune*, May 4, 1878.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1881.
- <sup>8</sup> New York *Herald*, February 5, 1881.
- <sup>9</sup> New York *Times*, March 27, 1881.

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- <sup>10</sup> Hungerford, *Men and Iron*, pp. 215-216, 349, 342, 315-336; *Vanderbilt vs. the Management*; New York *Herald*, July 26, 1881.
- <sup>11</sup> New York *Times*, June 25, 1884.
- <sup>12</sup> New York *World*, October 30, 1884.
- <sup>13</sup> Depew, *My Memories of Eighty Years*, p. 110.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *Times*, June 25, 1884.
- <sup>15</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 9, 1884.
- <sup>16</sup> Depew, *My Memories of Eighty Years*, p. 124.
- <sup>17</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 21, 1879.
- <sup>18</sup> Corey, *The House of Morgan*, p. 85.
- <sup>19</sup> New York *Herald*, November 27, 1879.
- <sup>20</sup> New York *Times*, November 27, 1879.
- <sup>21</sup> Depew, *My Memories of Eighty Years*, p. 244.
- <sup>22</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 13, 1883.
- <sup>23</sup> New York *World*, December 10, 1885.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Tribune*, May 27, 1884.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, October 27, 1882.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, January 6, 1883.
- <sup>27</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 361.
- <sup>28</sup> New York *Times*, May 5, 1883.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, August 5, 1883.
- <sup>30</sup> Hungerford, *Men and Iron*, pp. 315-336.
- <sup>31</sup> Hendrick, *Carnegie*, II, p. 26.
- <sup>32</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 10, 1885.
- <sup>33</sup> Hungerford, *Men and Iron*, pp. 315-336.
- <sup>34</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 10, 1885.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1885.
- <sup>36</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 360-361.
- <sup>37</sup> New York *Times*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>38</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>39</sup> Hendrick, *Carnegie*, II, p. 60.

## II

- <sup>1</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 449.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.
- <sup>3</sup> Harvey, *Frick*, pp. 269-270.
- <sup>4</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Tribune*, December 9, 1885.
- <sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, December 9, 1885.



## NOTES ON PART THREE

- <sup>8</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>9</sup> New York *Times*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>11</sup> New York *Herald*, June 9, 1878.  
<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, March 8, 1882.  
<sup>13</sup> New York *Times*, December 12, 1883.  
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1883.  
<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, October 14, 1883.  
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, August 20, 1884, November 23, 1884.  
<sup>18</sup> New York *Herald*, January 23, 1881, February 24, 1881.  
<sup>19</sup> Information supplied by Columbia and Vanderbilt Universities; New York *Times*, December 9, 1885; New York *Herald*, January 12, 1885.  
<sup>20</sup> New York *Times*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>21</sup> Van Pelt, *The W. K. Vanderbilt House*.  
<sup>22</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 213.  
<sup>23</sup> New York *World*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>27</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>28</sup> New York *World*, December 9, 1885.  
<sup>29</sup> New York *Times*, December 12, 1885.  
<sup>30</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, p. 239.  
<sup>31</sup> New York *Times*, December 13, 1885.  
<sup>32</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, pp. 388, 371.

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- <sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, January 22, 1884.  
<sup>2</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, pp. 349-350.  
<sup>3</sup> Ellet, *Queens of American Society*, p. 453.  
<sup>4</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 26, 1883.  
<sup>5</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, pp. 212, 214-215.  
<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-223.  
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299, 17, 24, 162.  
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 168-169, 83.

## NOTES ON PART FOUR

- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.  
<sup>10</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 25, 1888.  
<sup>11</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, pp. 233-236.  
<sup>12</sup> New York *Herald*, July 26, 1877.  
<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1881.  
<sup>14</sup> Wharton, *A Backward Glance*, pp. 54-55.  
<sup>15</sup> Moore, *Burnham*, I, p. 116.  
<sup>16</sup> Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats*, p. 140.  
<sup>17</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 18, 1881, January 16, 1883.  
<sup>18</sup> New York *Times*, March 27, 1883.  
<sup>19</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 367.  
<sup>20</sup> New York *Times*, March 27, 1883.  
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>23</sup> New York *Herald*, March 27, 1883.  
<sup>24</sup> New York *Sun*, March 27, 1883.  
<sup>25</sup> New York *World*, March 27, 1883.  
<sup>26</sup> Clews, *Fifty Years in Wall Street*, p. 366.  
<sup>27</sup> Rives, *The Coaching Club*, pp. 1-3, 66-69.  
<sup>28</sup> Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera*, pp. 1-16.  
<sup>29</sup> New York *Dramatic Mirror*, October 27, 1883.  
<sup>30</sup> Nicholls, *The Ultra-Fashionable Peerage*, pp. 47-49.

## II

- <sup>1</sup> McAllister, *Society as I Have Found It*, pp. 110-111, 118-119.  
<sup>2</sup> New York *Times*, New York *Herald Tribune*, January 26, 1933.  
<sup>3</sup> James, *The American Scene*, pp. 216-217.  
<sup>4</sup> Decies, *Turn of the World*, p. 47.  
<sup>5</sup> New York *Times*, October 1, 1886; New York *Tribune*, October 15, 1886.  
<sup>6</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 4, 1893, May 4, 1893, August 26, 1893.  
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, November 23, 1893, November 24, 1893.  
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, March 6, 1895.  
<sup>9</sup> New York *World*, March 6, 1895.  
<sup>10</sup> Lehr, *King Lehr*, p. 121.

## III

- <sup>1</sup> Barron, *More They Told Barron*, p. 116.  
<sup>2</sup> Villard, *Fighting Years*, pp. 213-214.

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<sup>3</sup> Bogen, *Anthracite Railroads*, p. 199; *New York Tribune*, October 24, 1893; Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera*, p. 52; *New York Times*, December 23, 1892, November 8, 1924.

<sup>4</sup> Gramont, *Au Temps des Equipages*, p. 151.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Herald*, August 29, 1895.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, November 7, 1895, March 5, 1895.

<sup>7</sup> *New York Times*, *New York Herald*, *New York Tribune*, November 7, 1895.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, March 14, 1923.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 4, 1896, January 12, 1896.

## IV

<sup>1</sup> *Chicago Record Herald*, September 15, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Tribune*, January 23, 1897, February 11, 1897; Wecter, *Saga of American Society*, pp. 368-371.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Tribune*, February 1, 1905, December 29, 1905; Wecter, *Saga of American Society*, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Tribune*, April 12, 1899, Sales Catalogue American Art Ass'n.

<sup>5</sup> Paris Edition, *New York Herald*, November 13, 1896.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1901, July 22, 1901, November 19, 1902.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, April 26, 1903, April 28, 1903.

<sup>8</sup> Paris Edition, *New York Herald*, May 28, 1906; *Spur*, August 1, 1920.

<sup>9</sup> Paris Edition, *New York Herald*, June 2, 1908, June 15, 1908, November 18, 1909.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, May 7, 1914, July 23, 1920.

<sup>11</sup> de Noisay, *Voilà les Courses*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times* and *New York Herald*, July 23, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Paris Edition, *New York Herald*, June 29, 1914, July 29, 1914.

## V

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, January 26, 1933; Lehr, *King Lehr*, pp. 178, 175-176; Decies, *Turn of the World*, p. 164; *New York Times*, April 9, 1915, June 30, 1914, February 20, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Times*, February 25, 1909, April 7, 1914, February 23,



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1915, December 14, 1919; information supplied by Vanderbilt and Columbia Universities; New York *Times*, July 23, 1920, December 6, 1917; Nordhoff and Hall, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, I, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Times*, April 19, 1917, March 14, 1923.

<sup>4</sup> Pecora, *Wall Street Under Oath*, pp. 215-218.

<sup>5</sup> Paris Edition, New York *Herald*, May 10, 1919, June 17, 1919.

<sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, July 23, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1920, March 7, 1923.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, March 14, 1923.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1920, March 7, 1923.

## VI

<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, November 17, 1926, November 25, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, March 20, 1920, November 10, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, May 14, 1921, July 5, 1921.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, November 25, 1926.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, 1932, February 4, 1933, March 13, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, January 26, 1933, February 12, 1933; Lehr, *King Lehr*, p. 290.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1921, May 20, 1925, March 18, 1927.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, April 21, 1940.

<sup>10</sup> Churchill, *Marlborough*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> *Country Life*, July, 1935; New York *Times*, November 25, 1926.

## VII

<sup>1</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 30, 1898, January 5, 1899, March 25, 1899, April 5, 1899, April 12, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1904; Moore, *McKim*, p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, July 22, 1901, August 24, 1901, June 28, 1902, July 7, 1903, January 30, 1904, June 8, 1904; New York *Times*, October 7, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 12, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Times*, March 1, 1922.

<sup>6</sup> Vanderbilt, *To Galápagos*.

<sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, April 9, 1927, June 3, 1927, August 27, 1927.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, April 2, 1926; New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, July 8, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> New York *Times*, December 19, 1923, April 15, 1917.

## NOTES ON PART FOUR

- <sup>10</sup> Vanderbilt, *Taking One's Own Ship*.  
<sup>11</sup> New York *Times*, November 27, 1936.  
<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1933.  
<sup>13</sup> House Report 2789, 71st Congress, 3rd Session.  
<sup>14</sup> New York *Times*, August 19, 1936, May 26, 1934, January 18, 1937; Vanderbilt, *Flying Lanes*, p. 13.  
<sup>15</sup> Information supplied by Vanderbilt University; New York *Times*, October 26, 1937, November 17, 1933, June 2, 1937, April 5, 1940.  
<sup>16</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, July 8, 1935; New York *Times*, July 10, 1935, June 5, 1937, January 16, 1938.  
<sup>17</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, November 19, 1938.

## VIII

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, October 4, 1935.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1935; *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1935.  
<sup>3</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1935.  
<sup>4</sup> New York *Times*, October 2, 1935.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, October 4, 1935, November 21, 1935.  
<sup>6</sup> *Country Life*, July, 1934; New York *Times*, January 3, 1911; *Directory of Directors*, 1939; New York *Times*, October 12, 1926, April 29, 1927, May 22, 1927, August 19, 1936.  
<sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, August 30, 1933, April 14, 1940.  
<sup>8</sup> *Country Life*, July, 1934; New York *Times*, October 1, 1930.  
<sup>9</sup> New York *Times*, September 7, 1930; Vanderbilt, *Enterprise*, pp. 218-219.  
<sup>10</sup> Vanderbilt, *Enterprise*, p. 185.  
<sup>11</sup> New York *Times*, September 18, 1930, September 19, 1930.  
<sup>12</sup> House Report 2789, 71st Congress, 3rd Session; Vanderbilt, *Enterprise*, p. xvii; New York *Times*, May 3, 1925, August 16, 1925, November 7, 1931; Lundberg, *Sixty Families*, p. 484.  
<sup>13</sup> New York *Times*, August 30, 1933, January 30, 1910.  
<sup>14</sup> *Country Life*, July, 1934; New York *Times*, April 11, 1927.  
<sup>15</sup> New York *Times*, May 23, 1934, September 1, 1934.  
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, September 18, 1934, September 19, 1934, September 21, 1934, September 23, 1934, September 26, 1934.  
<sup>17</sup> Vanderbilt, *Enterprise*, pp. 140-141; New York *Times*, September 24, 1934, September 23, 1934, September 25, 1934, September 26, 1934.  
<sup>18</sup> New York *Times*, July 7, 1937, August 1, 1937, August 3, 1937, August 5, 1937, August 6, 1937.

## NOTES ON PART FOUR

<sup>19</sup> *Time*, August 14, 1939.

<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, April 17, 1940.

## NOTES ON PART FIVE

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *McKim*, pp. 268-269.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Tribune*, May 26, 1895; *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune*, June 30, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 12, 1891, December 4, 1906, August 27, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, October 7, 1914.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Tribune*, August 23, 1891; *New York Times*, January 28, 1914, June 15, 1924, January 23, 1925.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, August 22, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Information supplied by Columbia University.

<sup>8</sup> Information supplied by Yale and Vanderbilt Universities; *New York Times*, July 9, 1913, June 30, 1938, November 13, 1931.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times*, August 22, 1926.

<sup>10</sup> *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, November 20, 1916 (cited in Lundberg, *Hearst*, p. 176).

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*, October 4, 1939.

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<sup>1</sup> *New York Tribune*, December 26, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, December 14, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Folder issued by Biltmore House and Gardens.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Herald*, March 7, 1914; *New York Tribune*, December 31, 1892.

<sup>5</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 26, 1892.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Times*, March 7, 1914; *New York Tribune*, March 7, 1914; *New York Times*, September 22, 1913.

<sup>7</sup> *Country Life*, September, 1902.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Tribune*, June 3, 1898.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, September 7, 1902, July 8, 1903; Harvey, *Frick*, p. 270; *New York Times*, March 7, 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times*, June 25, 1916, October 23, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, April 30, 1924, March 31, 1924, June 4, 1938.



## NOTES ON PART SEVEN

### NOTES ON PART SEVEN

<sup>1</sup> Croffut, *The Vanderbilts*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>2</sup> New York *Tribune*, March 25, 1893; New York *Times*, December 22, 1925, March 4, 1924, March 15, 1924.

<sup>3</sup> Information supplied by Columbia University; New York *Times*, March 20, 1915, September 7, 1924, December 22, 1925, November 4, 1920, February 4, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> *The New Yorker*, July 29, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 12, 1910; *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, November 20, 1916 (cited in Lundberg, *Hearst*, p. 176).

<sup>6</sup> Information supplied by Vanderbilt University.

<sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, October 30, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> Rives, *The Coaching Club*, pp. 108, 109, 123, 126-130, 173, 174.

<sup>9</sup> *Country Life*, February, 1903.

### NOTES ON PART EIGHT

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<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, January 15, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, April 23, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, September 9, 1894; Vanderbilt, *Without Prejudice*, pp. 92, 94; Clipping, New York Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> Vanderbilt, *Without Prejudice*, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Tribune*, November 26, 1892; Hitchcock, *Rhode Island Architecture*, p. 61; New York *Tribune*, June 19, 1895.

<sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, September 13, 1899.

<sup>7</sup> New York *World*, December 10, 1885; New York *Tribune*, September 13, 1899; *Memorial Service for Cornelius Vanderbilt*, October 8, 1899.

<sup>8</sup> Information supplied by Vanderbilt and Columbia Universities; *Columbia University Quarterly*, 1899; *Memorial Service for Cornelius Vanderbilt*, October 8, 1899; New York *Times*, July 1, 1886.

<sup>9</sup> New York *Tribune*, May 24, 1892.

<sup>10</sup> New York *Herald*, August 26, 1896.

<sup>11</sup> New York *Tribune*, September 13, 1899.

<sup>12</sup> *Outlook*, September 23, 1899.

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<sup>13</sup> New York *Times*, August 24, 1887.

<sup>14</sup> New York *Tribune*, December 12, 1900.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, June 22, 1902; New York *Herald*, September 13, 1899.

## II

<sup>1</sup> Chicago *Record Herald*, January 28, 1908; New York *Tribune*, January 28, 1908; New York *Times*, July 6, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Decies, *Turn of the World*, p. 127; Chicago *Record Herald*, January 15, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 28, 1908; Chicago *Record Herald*, January 25, 1908.

<sup>4</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 28, 1908; Chicago *Record Herald*, January 26, 1908.

<sup>5</sup> Chicago, *Record Herald*, January 25, 1908.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, June 6, 1909, January 8, 1911; New York *Times*, November 25, 1915, November 5, 1918.

<sup>7</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, July 6, 1938.

<sup>8</sup> New York *Times*, December 17, 1923, February 27, 1924.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, December 29, 1923, May 29, 1925, August 8, 1925.

<sup>10</sup> *Fortune*, May, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, April 23, 1934.

<sup>12</sup> New York *Times*, May 26, 1936.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, May 5, 1934; Vanderbilt, *Farewell*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> New York *Times*, February 26, 1927; New York *Herald Tribune*, May 13, 1939.

## III

<sup>1</sup> Lehr, *King Lehr*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>2</sup> New York *Tribune*, January 23, 1896, August 4, 1896; Paris Edition, New York *Herald*, August 4, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Times*, August 26, 1902; Lehr, *King Lehr*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Vanderbilt, *Farewell*, p. 21; New York *Tribune*, July 9, 1903, July 24, 1903, July 27, 1903; Chicago *Record Herald*, October 14, 1907.

<sup>5</sup> Chicago *Record Herald*, August 23, 1912.

<sup>6</sup> New York *Tribune*, August 20, 1899, January 19, 1901.

<sup>7</sup> New York *Times*, August 20, 1916.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> New York *Herald*, January 23, 1916.

<sup>10</sup> New York *Times*, December 15, 1916.

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- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, June 29, 1918, October 16, 1919.
- <sup>12</sup> Vanderbilt, *Farewell*, pp. 7, 10, 11, 8.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 30.
- <sup>14</sup> New York *Times*, April 30, 1920.
- <sup>15</sup> Bessie, *Jazz Journalism*, p. 162.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 166.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 170.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 170, 172.
- <sup>19</sup> New York *Times*, April 29, 1926.
- <sup>20</sup> Bessie, *Jazz Journalism*, p. 174; New York *Times*, May 12, 1931, November 11, 1927, November 27, 1927, July 4, 1928, June 20, 1931, July 1, 1931, August 5, 1931, January 5, 1935.
- <sup>21</sup> New York *Times*, June 29, 1927.
- <sup>22</sup> Vanderbilt, *Farewell*, pp. 110, 237.
- <sup>23</sup> Vanderbilt, *Personal Experiences*, p. 1.
- <sup>24</sup> New York *Times*, July 9, 1928, January 7, 1935.
- <sup>25</sup> *Directory of Directors*, 1931; House Report 2789, 71st Congress, 3rd Session.
- <sup>26</sup> New York *Times*, April 29, 1930; *Fortune*, July, 1939.

## IV

- <sup>1</sup> New York *American*, December 2, 1902.
- <sup>2</sup> Gardiner, *Canfield*, pp. 230, 323, 170, 162, 169, 143, 288; New York *Times*, March 9, 1900.
- <sup>3</sup> New York *American*, December 3, 1902.
- <sup>4</sup> New York *World*, December 3, 1902.
- <sup>5</sup> Gardiner, *Canfield*, pp. 143, 208.
- <sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, April 15, 1903, September 5, 1925, March 7, 1923.
- <sup>7</sup> Vanderbilt, *Without Prejudice*, p. 110.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 126.
- <sup>10</sup> New York *Times*, September 25, 1925, August 28, 1932, June 24, 1927.

## V

- <sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, November 6, 1930, December 1, 1931.
- <sup>2</sup> Whitney Museum of American Art, *Catalogue of the Collection to June 30, 1937*.
- <sup>3</sup> New York *Times*, July 26, 1934, October 4, 1934, October 10, 1934.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, November 23, 1934.



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### VI

<sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, January 15, 1901; New York *Tribune*, January 15, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> New York *Tribune*, May 10, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, July 27, 1899, October 15, 1899, February 4, 1900, May 10, 1900.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, October 2, 1900; Rives, *The Coaching Club*, p. 303; New York *Tribune*, July 9, 1901.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Herald*, January 15, 1901.

<sup>6</sup> Chicago *Record Herald*, November 13, 1907; *Lloyd's Register of American Yachts*.

<sup>7</sup> Chicago *Record Herald*, November 7, 1907; information supplied by Yale University; New York *Times*, May 9, 1915; Chicago *Record Herald*, February 1, 1905; New York *Times*, May 11, 1915.

<sup>8</sup> Chicago *Record Herald*, November 23, 1906; Paris Edition, New York *Herald*, June 12, 1910.

<sup>9</sup> Rives, *The Coaching Club*, p. 263.

<sup>10</sup> New York *Tribune*, October 27, 1901.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, April 6, 1902.

<sup>12</sup> Paris Edition, New York *Herald*, May 4, 1909, May 20, 1910; Chicago *Record Herald*, May 23, 1909, July 3, 1909.

<sup>13</sup> New York *Herald*, April 2, 1908, April 4, 1908, August 26, 1908, December 8, 1911.

<sup>14</sup> New York *Times*, May 7, 1916, May 1, 1915.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, August 9, 1917, May 11, 1915; New York *Tribune*, May 9, 1915.

<sup>16</sup> New York *Times*, May 8, 1915.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, May 9, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, May 28, 1915, May 11, 1915.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1917.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1915, October 26, 1925.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, April 4, 1919, November 15, 1934.

<sup>22</sup> Vanderbilt, *Without Prejudice*, p. 113.

### VII

<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, January 24, 1931, January 30, 1931, April 15, 1931, July 9, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, September 7, 1935, June 11, 1935, April 9, 1933, October 5,

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1934; Vanderbilt Cup Clippings, New York Public Library; New York *Times*, July 6, 1937, October 2, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Times*, March 28, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Literary Digest*, June 1, 1935; *Time*, July 22, 1935; *Country Life*, January, 1936; *American Magazine*, August, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> New York *Times* and New York *Herald Tribune*, June 9, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> New York *Times*, March 9, 1939.

## VIII

<sup>1</sup> Rives, *The Coaching Club*, p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Information supplied by W. H. Vanderbilt III; New York *Times*, July 24, 1926, February 10, 1927, May 4, 1931; House Report 2789, 71st Congress, 3rd Session.

<sup>3</sup> New York *Times*, November 2, 1923, May 13, 1925, June 6, 1928, May 25, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 16, 1929, December 28, 1929.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, February 25, 1931, November 8, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Annual State Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1940.

<sup>7</sup> Information supplied by the National Civil Service Reform League.

<sup>8</sup> Providence *Journal*, March 27, 1939, March 28, 1939.

<sup>9</sup> W. H. Vanderbilt III in conversation, April 15, 1939.

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THE VANDERBILT FAMILY TREE

The Commodore: Cornelius Vanderbilt I m. (1) Sophia Johnson m. (2) Frank Crawford

